

DOKTORI DISSZERTÁCIÓ

**THE TIMURID EMPIRE AND THE MING CHINA:
THEORIES AND APPROACHES
CONCERNING THE RELATIONS OF THE TWO
EMPIRES**

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Introduction

The Timurid Empire and the Ming China, although they were not adjacent empires, form the subject-matter of the present dissertation. The reason for choosing two empires having culturally little in common for the subject of this study goes back to at least three facts.

One is that both empires were born almost at the same time in the second half of the fourteenth century - on the ruins of the former Chinggisid Empire. As a consequence, the two empires were facing similar problems: the legitimacy of power both with and against the Chinggisids - albeit in different ways.

Another reason for studying these two empires together lies in the fact that their historical processes show astonishing similarities in the timing of their prospering and declining periods, giving one the impression as if their histories had been advancing hand-in-hand. As a result, the two empires became decisive factors at the same time in Asia's two regions, Central and East Asia, and started weakening from about the middle of the fifteenth century - though the Ming China managed to survive the Timurid dynasty in Central Asia by about a century.

The third reason, which might be considered the most significant one, is that despite the huge distances, the two empires were not cut off from each other, but they had lively communication throughout their histories. The basic communication channel took shape in dispatching so-called tribute missions from Central Asian cities to the Chinese capital at regular intervals, while China also sent its envoys to Central Asia from time to time. It is a remarkable fact that Central Asian tribute missions did not vanish with the collapse of the Timurid Empire, but they continued for a long time even after the Timurid dynasty in Central Asia ceased to exist in the early sixteenth century. Besides diplomatic missions, the other important communication channel was trade that took place at market-places both in the Chinese capital and along the Chinese border.

Along with these three points above, the Timurid Empire with an active-still-weak China-policy and the Ming China with a fluctuating-but-strong foreign policy offers a highly interesting research

field for the historians of both Central and East Asia. As it will be demonstrated later, the relationship between the two empires occupies a unique place in the history of the Chinese-Central Asian relations. This uniqueness is well expressed in Ralph Kauz's assumption, who points to a possible political integration of the two regions during the early fifteenth century – even though this integration has never been realised.

Moreover, I argue that studying the relationship of China and Central Asia six hundred years ago may be important not only for historians, but also for researchers of the current conditions. The reason for this lies in the fact that in recent years China's attention has turned to Central Asia again, attempting to create friendly relationship with the countries there. This active political interest of modern China in Central Asia seems to have promoted modern Chinese research into the fifteenth-century Sino-Central Asian conditions - thereby going back to the roots of a "traditionally friendly" relationship between the two regions.

The primary sources on the subject consists of materials which were mainly written in classical Persian and Chinese languages during the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries, with an overwhelming majority of the Chinese sources. Modern researchers studying the relationship of the two empires usually give descriptions about the available materials in their studies, such as Joseph Fletcher, Morris Rossabi, Ralph Kauz, Zhang Wende etc. Among them, it is Kauz who gave the latest description about the sources in Chinese, Persian and other languages (Kauz 2005).

Kauz argues that the research on the two empires may give much more work for Sinologists than scholars of Iranian or Turkic studies, simply due to the dominance of Chinese materials over Persian or Turkic ones. Put in other words, there is an unbalance in the primary sources. Moreover, Kauz points to the fact that the Timurid historians concentrated on recording events rather than describing geography, which means a kind of set-back in contrast with the great Arabian tradition of knowledge on geography. I assume that the reason for a dominance of Chinese sources over Persian ones may go back to the lack of a systematic China-policy of the Timurids who focused mainly on local events in Transoxania and Khurasan. On the other hand, Chinese sources, tell us very little about the administrative structure or military organization of the Timurid dynasty, laying much more emphasis on describing local products, customs, habits, as well as locations

(due to a geographical interest, though sometimes they seem to be incorrect). The two approaches reveal an obvious difference in interests of the two empires.

Among the Persian sources concerning China, in the first place stands the *Zubdat al-tawārīkh* by Mawlānā Shihāb al-dīn Abdallāh Bihdadīnī, *alias* Ḥāfiz-i Abrū (died in 1430). Ḥāfiz-i Abrū used numerous historical works in compiling a history of the Timurids (from the time of Timur's birth in 1336 to 1427), to which he added his own personal experiences. The significance of Ḥāfiz-i Abrū's work is that it records embassies from China to the Timurids and vice versa. However, as Kauz points out, unfortunately many of the Timurid missions are not included in Ḥāfiz-i Abrū's work.

The *Maṭla'ī sa'dayn wa-majma'ī baḥrayn* by Kamāl al-dīn 'Abd al-Razzāq Samarqandī (died in 1482) embraces a longer time than that of Ḥāfiz-i Abrū: from 1304 to 1470. Although Samarqandī's work can be regarded as the main source of the period between 1427 and 1470, and thereby it is a kind of continuation of Ḥāfiz-i Abrū's work, for some reason he stops writing about the Timurid-Chinese embassies after 1427, while the information on the Timurid-Chinese embassies in his work concerning the time up to 1427 is basically the same as in Ḥāfiz-i Abrū.¹

Another important Persian source for the research on the two empires is the account of Giyāt al-dīn al-Naqqāsh on his journey to China between 1420 and 1421. This work gives much more vivid and abundant information about the Ming China than any other Persian materials. Although Giyāt al-dīn's original account did not survive, it was compiled into the works of both Ḥāfiz-i Abrū and Samarqandī - among others. Ildikó Bellér-Hann calls Giyāt al-dīn's journey one of the most important Muslim works on China.²

¹ Besides these two main works, the following ones can be mentioned: Nizām al-dīn Shāmī's *Zafarnāme*, Sharaf al-dīn 'Alī Yazdī's *Zafarnāme*, Fasīḥ Aḥmad b. Jalāl al-dīn Khwāfī's *Mujmal-i Fasīḥī*, Mīrkhwānd's *Tarīkh-i rawḍat as-safā*, as well as Khwāndamīr (Mīrkhwānd's grandson)'s *Ḥabīb al-siyar* (for these see Kauz 2005, pp. 16-20.)

² Bellér-Hann, who made an English translation and carried out a linguistic analysis (1995) of the *Tārīkh-i Khatā'ī*, a Turkish translation (accomplished in 1495 by Ḥājji b. Muḥammad) of Giyāt al-dīn's journal makes a detailed discussion on the problem of the similarities and differences between the two versions in the works of Ḥāfiz-i Abrū and Samarqandī, assuming that the two historians used a third Persian text which might have been the original account. She also assumes that this third (perhaps original) Persian text may have served as a base of the

As for the Chinese sources, there is an unpublished dissertation written recently by Zhang Wende that lists, summarizes and describes all the important works concerning the relationship of the Timurid dynasty and the Ming China. Since his dissertation seems to be the most complete one about the Chinese sources, and it is written in Chinese, I deem it useful to make a brief English extract of these sources.³ Zhang Wende compiled a list of non-Chinese materials too, the repetition of which seems needless here, since most of them are the same as mentioned above.

Besides the Chinese sources, there are two sources in European languages too. One of them is by Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, the other one is by Johann Schiltberger. The former one was a Spanish envoy sent to Timur in Samarqand where he spent three years between 1403 and 1406. His report is peculiarly important to us, since he described the inpolite way Timur treated the envoys from China. Schiltberger was a slave in the Timurid court between 1396 and 1425.

Finally, at the turning point of the fifteenth-sixteenth century, there was a Central Asian merchant, ‘Alī Akbar Khatāī, who wrote a report about China, which he devoted to the Ottoman ruler, Sultan Suleyman I.⁴

However, the main subject of the present dissertation is not the primary sources, as one would expect, but the secondary literature. It goes without saying that the reason for such a kind of choice of subject is not due to a negligence of the primary sources, but to the fact that the international

Tārikh-i Khatāī as well.

³ See Appendix II. Among the Chinese sources, it is the accounts of Chen Cheng, a Chinese official that appears to provide the most important Chinese information on the early fifteenth-century Central Asia. I made a complete translation of both sources from the original Chinese texts with commentaries, which I intend to publish in a separate study.

⁴ ‘Alī Akbar spent many years in Peking. Later he settled down in Istanbul where he accomplished an account in 1516 about his experiences in China. Ildikó Bellér-Hann draws attention to the fact that although ‘Alī Akbar’s account was written a century after that of Giyāt al-dīn al-Naqqāsh, there are some similarities between the two accounts both in the subject and the literary genre. Moreover, just as in the case of the Naqqash account, the original account was written in Persian, while the Turkish translation was made later, in 1582. These similarities led to some confusion in later times. Nonetheless, Bellér-Hann also asserts that the two accounts complement each other very well, since Naqqash as an envoy and Ali Akbar as a merchant experienced different aspects of China.

research on the Timurid-Ming Chinese contacts do not appear to have been advancing hand-in-hand. This fact has led to a more or less uncoordinated international research on the subject. To say *uncoordinated* here may sound rather provoking, since it may suggest that there has been almost no reference made among the various studies. Such a suggestion, however, would be very incorrect.

The latest and most complete study by Ralph Kauz on the subject makes use of international studies abundantly. Kauz discusses the historical process of the diplomatic relations between the two empires in a chronological order, by making use of studies in the Western and Chinese literature.⁵ In doing so, Kauz addresses these studies in connection with the respective diplomatic missions between the Timurids and the Ming China, providing the reader with a well-organised arrangement of them. However, I argue that the possible arrangement of these studies is not limited to such a kind of organisation only. The above-mentioned *uncoordinated* condition in the international research refers to the lack of a study that would address the subjects, as well as the theories and approaches presented by various scholars in describing the relationship of the two empires. I stress that this lack is hindering the development of the Timurid-Ming research, making difficult to shed light upon future research trends too, therefore there is a high need to summarize and discuss the international research in one single study by addressing the subjects, theories and approaches in the various researches related to the matter. The birth of such a summarizing work, however, may have been hindered so far by the fact that it needs one not only to know the Western languages, but to read Chinese and Japanese too.⁶ Since I studied both Sinology and Turcology at the Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest, as well as I pursued Japanese studies at Kyoto University in Japan, I decided to attempt to fill this gap in the present dissertation.

Nonetheless, the structure of my dissertation is not arranged according to the theories and approaches of the respective studies, as it could be expected, but it is first divided into chapters treating the results of Western,

⁵ Although Kauz mentions some of the Japanese researchers' works related to the subject, he leaves their studies rather undiscussed.

⁶ The Chinese and Japanese are the two other main literatures besides the Western one that have produced significant results in the Timurid-Ming Chinese research.

Japanese and Chinese literatures, and then subdivided according to the main subjects. The theories and approaches in the respective studies will be discussed in a chronological order - within each subject in the respective literatures. The subordination of the studies to the three major literatures may be disputable, suggesting that the present dissertation does not go beyond the boundaries of a simple description of the international research. However, this subordination is not due to a purely geographical categorisation. As demonstrated on later pages, the Western, Japanese and Chinese literatures have developed separately, with little regard to the results of other researches. The separate development of the Timurid-Ming research in the three literatures could not be grasped if one arranges the respective studies primarily according to the subjects, theories and approaches. Therefore, I found the above-mentioned subordination useful in order to accomplish two achievements at the same time: presenting and outlining the development of the Timurid-Ming research in each region, while discussing the theories and approaches in the addressed studies. There will be a summary of the findings given at the end of each chapter too. In the last chapter, I will both make a conclusion of the findings on previous pages and throw light upon new possible approaches for further research trends, pointing to the fact that the significance of the Timurid-Ming research goes beyond its own boundaries in the general research of the Chinese-foreign relations.

In connection with this, the purpose of the present dissertation is three-folded:

1. Presenting the studies concerning the relationship of the two empires in the Western, Japanese and Chinese scholarly literatures.
2. Analysing both the theories and approaches presented in the respective studies, as well as investigating the level of theorisation in them.
3. Outlining new approaches for further research trends.

In accordance with these purposes, the structure of this dissertation is the following:

1. Chapter One: providing a historical background of the Timurid Empire, as well as the Ming China, with a special attention to the

features of their relationship.⁷

2. Chapter Two: presenting and analysing the studies in the West.
3. Chapter Three: presenting and analysing the studies in Japan.
4. Chapter Four: presenting and analysing the studies in China.
5. Chapter Five: making a general conclusion on the development of the Timurid-Ming research in the three regions, as well as outlining new approaches.

Moreover, in Appendix III, I will arrange the studies of the various scholars in a thematic table in order to help the reader obtain a general understanding about the main subjects of the Timurid-Ming Chinese research.

I managed to make contacts with the following scholars on the subject: Ralph Kauz (Wien University), Morris Rossabi (Columbia University), Natalia Karimova (Tashkent, Uzbekistan), Kazuyuki Kubo (Kyoto University), Takuji Kawaguchi (Hokkaido University) and Liu Yingsheng (China). I am deeply indebted to all of them for their readiness to help me. I owe special thanks to Ralph Kauz and Kazuyuki Kubo for their encouragement and kind help with providing me with information and materials on the Western and Chinese literatures (Kauz), and on the Japanese one (Kubo). Without their generous assistance it would have been impossible to carry out my dissertation.

⁷ Since the historical background seems to be indispensable to follow the analyses of the studies on the two empires, I found it necessary to make a historical outline in Chapter One, before starting to discuss the contents of the studies in each region. However, Chapter One is not intended to be a pure description of historical facts, but rather to reveal the main characteristic features of both the internal structures in the two empires and their relationship for over a hundred years from the late fourteenth century.

Chapter One

Historical Background

Before presenting and analysing the studies in the Western, Japanese and Chinese literature, concerning the relationship of the Timurid Empire and the Ming China, it seems to be highly useful to devote a whole chapter to make a review of the histories of the two empires in order to understand the main aspects of their relationship. These aspects are partly based on the internal structures of the two empires, and partly on external factors, such as their relationships with the neighbouring peoples. Apparently, internal and external factors together were responsible for the development of the relationship between the Timurids and the Ming Chinese. This development can be roughly described as first having a rising (more and more intensive and prospering) period until about the early fifteenth century, and then a slow declining one until the disappearance of the Timurid dynasty from the historical stage of Central Asia in the early sixteenth century.

However, this kind of generalisation in the development of their relationships may seem to be a little exaggerated, since one can see interludes both in the rising and the declining periods. Such an interlude was seen at the time of Timur who first showed friendly intentions towards China during the 1380s and early 1390s, but suddenly changing this friendly attitude into a hostile one during the second half of the 1390s, and even attempting to attack China in 1405. After his death in 1405, the relationship between the two dynasties became normal again, which made possible for the once broken connection-buliding attempts to continue in a much more intensive form than ever before.

Moreover, making a review of the histories of the two dynasties is not only useful for obtaining a general understanding of the aspects of their relationships, but also for understanding the approaches and standpoints of the various researchers dealing with the two empires (discussed in later chapters). Put in other words, without a review of the historical background, it may become difficult to follow the main debates about the matter. A review can also make possible to show light on new aspects which have not

been taken into account so far. This statement especially goes for the subject of the Timurid-Ming contacts, since although the histories of both dynasties have been studied respectively by numerous scholars, the number of those who have a good understanding of both histories is much smaller. But even among these scholars, there are only a handful of them who managed to get a deep knowledge of the relationship of the Timurids and the Ming Chinese.

Besides, there is one more reason for why it is highly recommendable to make a review of the histories of the two dynasties. Namely, although it goes without saying that the two empires differ from each other in both their cultures and their administration structures etc., they seem to show certain similarities in their historical processes, which fact becomes obvious only by drawing a parallel between them. There are two aspects of these similarities. The first one can be considered as a rational aspect, referring to the fact that both empires came into existence on the ruins of the former Chinggisid Empire, which made them face the problem of how to legitimize their newly regimes. This problem becomes quite peculiar in the case of the nomadic population if one takes into account that the Chinggisid Empire was functioning as a kind of watershed in the history of Inner Asia, along which one can distinguish a pre-Chinggisid and a post-Chinggisid period. In the post-Chinggisid period, newly emerging empires had to explain the legal base of their powers from a view-point of their relation with the former Chinggisid dynasty, which means that their legal recognition was considered dubious if they failed to prove a certain relationship with the Chinggisid geneology.

Unlike the nomads, the newly-born Ming China was not facing such a kind of legitimacy problem, since it was not a nomadic civilization affected deeply by Mongolian world-order. One can assume that the Ming Chinese did not even need to legitimize their action to overturn the almost one-hundred-year-long Mongol rule, since they were oppressed by an alien people, therefore, it goes without saying that they had a quite obvious right to get rid of them. However, turning over a regime purely for national reasons had not been a legitimate action in ancient China until the second half of the nineteenth century, since nationalism as a European concept did not emerge before the appearance of modernization in China. Consequently, the founders of the Ming China were forced to find another way to explain the reason for their rise against the Mongols, which they managed to

achieve by referring to Confucian virtues. This resulted in their unique attitude to the (Mongolian) Yuan dynasty by half accepting and half denying its regime. Although the Timurid dynasty and the Ming China had a different relation to the Chinggisid Empire, and therefore having a different reaction and attitude to it in the legitimacy of their powers, what becomes common in the two dynasties is that both were forced to explain their legitimacy by referring to the Chinggisids.

Another aspect of the similarities can be considered less obvious than that one above, or can be taken just as coincidental, if one takes a look at both the timing of the births of the Timurid dynasty and the Ming China and their historical processes, with regard to the sequence of powerful and weak periods. These issues, along with the legitimacy problems above, will be addressed more detailed later in this chapter.

In accordance with the afore-mentioned purposes, Chapter One is divided into the following five parts. The first one is an outline of the Timurid dynasty from its birth to the end, focusing on its historical development. The second one is an outline of the Ming China from its establishment until the early sixteenth century, the time when the Timurid Empire ceased to exist in Central Asia - albeit the Ming China survived it by about a hundred years. Consequently, the first two parts are devoted to describe the historical processes of the two empires separately, however, in both parts, there is a stress put on the early times, since the two empires had more active and vivid relationships at the initial stages of their histories.

The third part, however, is not about discussing the two empires separately, but it is devoted to attempt to make a parallel between them, revealing certain similarities in their historical developments. Although the two empires *do* differ from each other in both a cultural and a political respect, their historical processes show resemblance to some degree, which is worth being addressed in a separate part.

The fourth part is devoted to address the concrete relationships between the two empires, which makes this part become the most significant one in the present chapter in the sense that an outline of these relationships is indispensable for discussing the studies of Western, Japanese and Chinese scholars in later chapters. However, the fourth part of Chapter One will be restricted to describing the concrete relationships themselves without

referring to the theories and approaches of scholars on the matter, which will be the tasks of other chapters. Here in this part, I will only focus on questions such as when the relationship between the two empires started, in what forms these relationships were realized, and what characteristic features they held. In accordance with this, a special emphasis will be put on discussing the envoys sent from both the Timurid Empire and the Ming China, since these envoys represented the main connecting link between the two empires. However, what becomes a more significant question is what these embassies may have meant for both the Timurids and the Ming Chinese. Here, I only point to the fact that these embassies did not have the same meaning for the two parties.

In the fifth part, I will make a brief summary of the present chapter, outlining some aspects of the relationship.

1.1. The Timurid Empire

The Timurid dynasty, as the last nomadic empire before modernization set foot in Inner Asia, emerged in the second half of the fourteenth century and lasted for over a hundred years. It was born on the ruins of the former Chingissid Empire, which fact made its history get interwoven with that of the Mongols to a high degree. It was the Chaghatai Ulus, one of the four 'ulus' that were divided among Chinggis Khan's sons after his death, that comes into the foreground, since it is the territory of the Chaghatai Ulus on which the Timurid dynasty came into existence.

The historical facts that promoted the emergence of a new dynasty in the second half of the fourteenth century can be considered as clear. The Chaghatai dynasty, which had ruled for a hundred years or so, lost its political power by the middle of the fourteenth century, and the Chaghatai Ulus fell into disintegration. The trigger of this disintegration was the fact that Tarmashirin, a Chaghatai ruler, became a devout Muslim, which, however, was not acceptable for the tribal chieftains, who wanted to keep the Chingissid traditions untouched from Islamic influences. This led to a rebellion against Tarmashirin, and he was removed from power in 1334. After his deposition, the 'ulus' sank into a thirty-year-long anarchy, during which time emirs were fighting each other with Chingissid puppet-khans

behind them, at least in Transoxania. Not very long after Tarmashirin's removal from power, the emirs in Semirechie and Jungaria (the Eastern part of the Chaghatai Ulus) agreed in reviving the Chinggisid traditions, and by doing so, it separated from the Western part (Transoxania) of the Chaghatai Ulus, renaming it Moghulistan. Thus, the political anarchy in the Western part became consolidated relatively fast. Consequently, Tarmashirin's removal due to religious conflicts led to the 'ulus' falling into two parts. It is another issue that the hope of the emirs for reviving the Mongolian traditions in the Eastern part could not last for long.

Unlike the newly formed Moghulistan, the political consolidation took a much longer time in Transoxania, which had not taken place before Timur⁸ got to power in 1370. However, the way to accomplish it was rather difficult, since after 1334, the political structure in Transoxania took a new shape. This new shape was not favourable for a person who attempted to defeat first and then unite the fighting emirs under one control. It was not the time any longer when the power of a central ruler could obtain overwhelming acceptance from local chieftains.

Beatrice F. Manz, who made a detailed analysis of Timur's rise and rule, argues that the reason for why it was rather difficult for one single person to emerge from among the emirs and rule over Transoxania lies in the fact that the emirs were making profits from the uncertainty due to the lack of a central ruler. This uncertainty helped them maintain military sources, political initiations and wealth in their own hands. The rivalries inside of the tribes themselves became connected with the rivalries for the entire 'ulus'. During these rivalries, the emirs became interested in making allies with each other. However, these allies did not prove to be long-standing, since once an emir was about to unite the whole 'ulus' and become the head

⁸ Timur was born in 1336 near Kesh (later known as Shahrisabz). His father, Taraghai, was a Turkish emir of the Barlas tribe, who was also a devout Muslim. This tribe had a Mongol name and ancestry, but virtually it was Turkic, so Timur's native language was Turki. He may have spoken some Persian, but almost certainly no Mongolian. Timur became famous for his leading and fighting abilities quite fast, since he spent his youth with being the head of a group looking for boots. But it is not before 1361 that he started to make efforts to re-unite the whole 'ulus', which finally took ten years until he became the de-facto ruler of Transoxania. By that time, Timur already had created a huge army following him and gained a strong position among the emirs and chieftains.

of all the nomadic tribes, the other emirs were not interested in supporting him any longer, consequently, they had no choice but to turn against him. The political culture of this period was based on the notion of that there was an ideal need for a central ruler who could represent the whole 'ulus', however in reality, it was not desirable for the emirs themselves to realize this idea. Thus, the removal of Tarmashirin from power in 1334 changed the political identity in Transoxania in the way that the emirs maintained its territorial identity along with the idea of *a need for a central ruler*, however, they were not supporting the realization of a new central power over their heads. The allies of the tribes in the Chaghatai Ulus were formed not on a common leadership, but on common interests and customs. The tribes were still loyal to the Chaghatayid dynasty on an ideal level, using the military and administrative system of former times. Basically, in spite of the thirty-year-long anarchy, the 'ulus' managed to maintain its original form and structure until Timur finally seized power. Therefore, the question here is how it became possible for Timur to get to power and re-unite Transoxania under such circumstances. Since the answer to this question appears to be highly important to understand the internal features of the Timurid Empire, it is worth making an outline of the process of Timur's rise on the base of Manz's work:

1. Timur first had to obtain the power over his own tribe (Barlas). In order to do so, he had no other choice but to look for allies outside his tribe. Those who were supporting him were not from inside the Barlas tribe, but people who were related to his family, and those who were accompanying him in his predatory campaigns. The biggest obstacle for Timur to take the power over was to defeat the leader of the Barlas clan, Haci beg. As long as Haci beg was alive, Timur was not in the position to take over the power. Therefore, he decided to look for allies outside the tribe, among which the most important was that with Emir Hussain. By enjoying the support of those who were hostile to the Barlas clan, he managed to become the leader of his tribe by 1361.
2. The way Timur got to power in his own tribe may have not been very unique, since looking for allies outside one's tribe was quite a common practice. One can consider that this was even necessary for

an ambitious person who had a wish for ruling the entire 'ulus'. However, these allies did not last for long in most cases, since shifting allies was also a common practice among the emirs, who considered their own temporary interests as more important than creating firm and long-standing allies. The break-up between Timur and Emir Hussain in the middle of the 1360s gives an obvious example of such a kind of shift. Another reason for why ambitious emirs were forced to look for supporters outside their own tribes is that the tribes themselves were not really reliable either. The relationship of the respective tribes with their leaders was quite similar to the relationship of the 'ulus' with its ruler in the sense that though the power in both cases could be *seized*, it was not easy to gain support and maintain it. By making a parallel between the rivalries inside the tribes, as well as the rivalries among the emirs for the central power over the 'ulus', it becomes clear that to find allies outside the 'ulus' against hostile emirs was also quite a common practice. In doing so, Khwarezm, Khurasan and Moghulistan became potential supporters for the fighting emirs in Transoxania, and Timur was not reluctant in having recourse to them either. One can assume that what the tribes were like in a micro-scope dimension was the same in the case of the 'ulus' in a macro-scope one.

3. Timur was very successful in defeating the hostile tribes and emirs by using his leading and military abilities, as well as his charismatic personality with the result that he became the central ruler of the 'ulus' by 1370. The main reason for his success, however, may have lied in the fact that there was no other charismatic candidate that the tribes could support against Timur. At the time he got to power, a new age started in the history of the Chaghatai Ulu. The army that served as a base of Timur's power consisted of the same soldiers, however, there was a huge change in the power structure. While it is the tribal chieftains who were in power, having control over lands and most of the military before, now they had no choice but to give way to the emergence of a new elite. This new elite consisted of Timur's relatives and personal followers. Consequently, the tribes lost much of their power over their armies and control over their territories. The tribes that were under direct control of Timur's

followers remained untouched, but those which were not had to rest content with a lower position. Due to the change in the power structure, one's power was not dependent of the strength of his tribe any longer, but his closeness to Timur himself.

4. It took about twelve years for Timur to consolidate his power. In the beginning, he had to face the problem that most of his army was still under direct control of tribal chieftains, which might endanger his power. Therefore, he attempted to find ways of how to weaken the emirs' power. Firstly, he entrusted people from the Barlas tribe to govern areas that had been governed by other tribes before. Secondly, he brought in numerous soldiers from territories outside Transoxania. Both policies resulted in weakening the position of the tribal chieftains, and by 1380-1381, the power re-arrangement had become completed. Since that time, there was no remarkable change in the power structure itself. Timur's followers were put into the highest military positions, constituting a closed elite. However, Timur could not feel in safe yet, since he had to be able to maintain the new order, moreover, he had to be sure of that the new elite would not turn against him. Therefore, he decided to carry out constant campaigns outside the border of the 'ulus', which were led by him personally. As a result, Timur spent less time inside the borders of Transoxania than outside of it in the rest of his life. Timur made many of his troops be stationed in the newly conquered areas, appointing military commissioners in charge of supervision. Moreover, Timur often changed the appointments, leaving no time for a potential emergence of allies against him. As for Timur's administrative system, it was neither systemized, nor prescribed clearly. Although the two sides, a military and a civilian side of the administration were separated theoretically, in reality there were overlappings. The official careers in the administration system were not well-described, and jobs were often done by those who theoretically were not in charge of them. Consequently, it is hard to find a reasonable system in Timur's administration policy.

Based on Manz's work outlined above, it is worth noting that the ambiguity in the administration system was rather beneficial for Timur's

intention to keep the power under his personal control. By bringing his people into a state of personal dependence of him, Timur managed to prevent from potential uprisals against him. Therefore, one can say that there might have been a rational reason in his ambiguous administration policy after all. This system seemed to be functioning quite smoothly as long as he was alive.

Timur, however, was just a *de facto* ruler, not officially recognized, since the legitimacy of power was based on one's relationship with the Chinggisid dynasty. When Timur got to power in Transoxania in 1370, the *de jure* ruler was a Chinggisid Khan, Suyurghatmish (1370-1388), in whose name the coins continued to be minted, and then later in the name of his son, Sultan Mahmud (1388-1403). Therefore, Timur was facing a legitimacy problem of his power that had to be solved. If one makes a parallel between Timur and Chinggis Khan, one can immediately see a remarkable difference in the legitimacy of their rules. Chinggis Khan's legitimacy was indisputable, since his leadership over a Mongolian confederacy was legitimized by the quriltay in 1206, changing his name from Temüjin to Chinggis Khan. Thereafter, whatever Chinggis Khan did, was done by a legitimate ruler who had no need for justification of his deeds.

However, back to the time of Timur, although the Chingissid Empire fell into parts and was on the brink of vanishing, it was still strong enough to be throwing a shadow over those who had ambitions to create new powers. The politico-cultural heritage of the Mongols was so powerful that actually no nomadic ruler could feel their rules legitimate, unless they could show up some relationship with the Chinggisid dynasty. There were basically two ways of how to solve this problem. One was through marriage with someone having Chinggisid origin, and the other one was to rule in the name of a Chinggisid puppet khan. Timur managed to strengthen the legitimacy of his power in both ways. He married a princess of the Chinggisid line, while he was also ruling in the name of the two afore-mentioned Chinggisid rulers. Consequently, he was not in the position to call himself a khan, but had to rest content with using the title emir and gurgan (or küregen). The latter one means son-in-law in Mongolian, and it is a remarkable phenomenon that in the Chinese historiography Timur was named 'fuma', which means 'imperial son-in-law' in Chinese. This shows light upon that the newly arisen Ming Chinese court admitted Timur as a sovereign ruler related to the

Chinggisid dynasty. However, what becomes peculiar concerning Timur's choice for a puppet khan, in whose name he could rule, is that he preferred the Ögedeyid line rather than the Chaghatayid one in 1370.

There was one more resource for Timur to make use of for justifying his realm, and that is Islam. Being the son of a devout Muslim, Timur was not only exposed to Turco-Mongolian cultural influences, but also that of Islamic ones. Although these two cultural heritages were not really compatible to each other, since they were representing totally different values, Timur succeeded in making a kind of mixed use of both the Islamic shariat and the Mongolian yasa, by referring them to different aspects of the administration, that is the military law and the civil law. One should not forget that during the fourteenth century, Islam had not become an overwhelming religion and ideology yet, though it was spreading slowly and irresistibly. It seems as if Timur had been making use of both Islamic and Mongolian customs the way he felt it was needed to reinforce his power. This may lead to the assumption of that Timur might have been a rather opportunist ruler, who put both ideologies and people under his ambitious purposes for ruling.

Back to the time when Timur succeeded in re-uniting the western part of the former Chaghatai Ulus, he started to lead aggressive campaigns outside Transoxania. He first invaded Khurasan, and captured the city Herat. Then, he continued his wars of conquer in Mazandaran and Western Iran, and finally took Ray and Sultaniyeh. He led numerous wars during the 1380s and 1390s against Luristan, Azarbayjan, Georgia, Anatolia, Iran, the Golden Horde, North India, the Mamluks of Egypt, and finally he even defeated the strong Osmanli army and captured the sultan, Bayazid I. at today's Ankara in 1402. The war against the Osmanli empire caused some difficulty for Timur, not because of the fact that the Osmanli army was larger and stronger than that of Timur, but because it was an Islamic country fighting the Christian Europe successfully, so Timur had to find some good excuse to justify his war ambition against it. He finally managed to do so, and he defeated the Osmanli army with some military trick - typical of a genuine commander.

Thereafter, Timur started to get prepared for the invasion of China in order to realize his ambition to attach it to his empire. It is not known what exactly Timur thought about the possibilities of carrying out of such a huge plan, but it is known that he took a Mongolian prince, Tayzi Uglan, with

him, who presumably could have become a new ruler of China, if Timur had succeeded in his plan (Kauz, 2005). This suggests that Timur was quite determined in realizing his ambition. However, in order to attack China, he had to go through Moghulistan, since it lied between Transoxania and China, therefore he had to ask for a permission of the ruler of Moghulistan to let his troops pass through its territory. The interesting thing is that Moghulistan had been another target of Timur, which he attacked five times during the 1380s, but never succeeded in occupying, and consequently, restoring the former Chaghatai 'ulus'.

According to John E. Woods, there was a significant change in Timur's ideology of power in 1391. Timur said in his letter to Bayazid that it was only Chaghatai and Ögedei who represented the Chinggisid heritage legally, while Möngke and Hülegü were usurpers. By doing so, Timur managed to get a certain legitimicity to restore the Chinggisid line. This means a kind of justification for attacking China from a Chinggisid point of view, however, Timur was not just a ruler obtaining Turco-Mongolian heritage, but also an Islamic one, and as such he was justified to lead a war against a non-Islamic country.

Timur was nearly seventy years old when he finally went against China, but never managed to engage in fighting with Chinese forces, since he died in Utrar, at a long distance from the nearest Chinese garrison. Thereafter, his army people decided to quit the war campaign.

Before his death, Timur nominated one of his grandsons, Pir Muhammad, who was the son of Jahangir,⁹ to be the heir of the empire. However, the weakness of Timur's power structure became clear soon after his death, since Timur's followers turned against his will, and Pir Muhammad was eventually killed by his own army general in 1407. Timur's decision to make his administration dependent of his person could work smoothly as long as he was alive, but it was about to collapse after his death. Therefore, there is no wonder that there was a fight breaking out among his followers for the throne. Among those who demanded the throne for themselves, it is Pir Muhammad who had the most well-founded reason to get it, since he was chosen by Timur personally. However, there are two other among Timur's descendants who had a claim on power. One is Khalil Sultan, the son of

⁹ Timur had four sons: Jahangir, Umar Shaykh, Miranshah and Shah Rukh. The first three ones predeceased their father.

Miranshah, who even managed to capture Samarqand, while the other one is Shah Rukh, Timur's fourth son, who was the governour of Herat. These two were the main persons among those who attempted to get to power after Timur's death. Therefore, the fight for the throne after the death of Pir Muhammad continued until 1409, when Shah Rukh managed to make Khalil Sultan give up Samarqand. The fights for the throne finally ended with the victory of Shah Rukh, whose long rule (1409-1447) brought a consolidation and relative peacefulness in the empire.

As Ralph Kauz points out, the envoys from China made significant contribution to the legitimacy of Shah Rukh's power, which would not have been so obvious, considering the disputes about the throne in the preceding four years. It was due to the fact that China was enjoying a huge respect among the peoples of Central Asia, presumably because of its richness and powerful standing – not to mention those products that were transported from China along the Silk Road, among which some goods such as tea were highly useful for the nomadic population too. Consequently, the fact that China sent envoys to Shah Rukh referred to the recognition of his power by the Ming Chinese court. Among these envoys, it is that of Fu An etc. sent by China in 1409 that remarked a special significance in the legitimacy process, since it was the year when Shah Rukh eventually started to rule over his father's heritage, by defeating his enemies.

The territory that Shah Rukh inherited consisted of Iran, Khurasan, Khwarezm, Iran and Transoxania, which was much smaller in scale, compared to the area that fell to the share of Chinggis Khan's sons. But what may be more important is that Timur's death remarked a shrinkage in the Timurid dynasty, which was an opposite process to that of the Chinggisid, since the decedents of Chinggis Khan continued their territorial expansions through wars of conquer, even reaching East Europe in 1241, well after the founder's death in 1226.

Shah Rukh proved to be a devout Muslim, having passionate feelings towards the Iranian culture. He eventually turned his father's Central Asian empire into an orthodox Islamic sultanate. He changed his capital from Samarqand to Herat, this Khurasanian city, where he had been the governour before his father's death. Thereafter, the capital of the Timurid dynasty, with some brief interlude between 1447-1449 when Ulugh Beg, a son of Shah Rukh, changed the capital back to Samarqand, stood *mainly* in

Herat. Consequently, Samarqand has lost much of its political significance, and by making Herat the Timurid capital, the centre of the empire became much farther from China. However, the geographical replacement of the capital did not really affect the Timurid-Chinese relations, at least not during the time of Shah Rukh and the Yongle emperor, since the blooming period of their relationship was just about to commence.

With the death of Timur, the Timurid dynasty took a new shape in several aspects. First of all, it was no longer a dynasty with wars of conquest, but there was put much more emphasis on consolidation and stability, as well as on arts and science. Civilization became more emphasized than devastation. Civilization here means mainly Islamic civilization. As a result, there was a shift from the Chinggisid heritage and customs towards Islamic ones – at least during the time of Shah Rukh. Unlike his father, Shah Rukh did not feel necessary to rule in the name of a Chinggisid puppet khan, but he was ruling fully in his own right, using the supreme Islamic title of sultan. He spared no expenses to help artists and writers, to build religious architects such as madrasas, mosques, shrines, to give religious donations etc. By the end of his rule, Shah Rukh lost the western Iranian territories to a powerful Turcoman confederacy, the Qara-qoyunlu. However, in other parts of his empire, Shah Rukh could enjoy indisputable prestige.

His death in 1447 remarked the beginning of a new wave of fights for the vacant throne. Although Ulugh Beg, Shah Rukh's son became the nominal ruler of the empire, he had to face numerous rivals, having his own son Abd al-Latif among them. Ulugh Beg was a man of science rather than a military person, who could feel safe under the protection of his father, but who himself was not capable to maintain the power against his enemies.¹⁰ When Shah Rukh died in 1447, he ascended his father's throne, but he was challenged immediately the next year by his nephew Ala al-Dawla. Although he managed to defeat him, he failed to recognize the achievements of his elder son, Abd al-Latif, by showing obvious preference for his other son, Abd al-Aziz. He even deprived his elder son of the treasury that he had gathered

¹⁰ Before Ulugh Beg devoted his life to science, he made attempts to obtain some military achievements. In 1424, he attacked Moghulistan, which was nothing but just a kind of plundering campaign. Thereafter in 1427, he engaged in fighting the Golden Horde, which turned out to be so disastrous for him that he decided to withdraw from military campaigns.

in Herat. Thereafter, Ulugh Beg and his younger son left for Samarqand, leaving Abd al-Latif in the Khurasian city. This, however, turned out to be a fatal decision for Ulugh Beg. Being deeply humiliated, Abd al-Latif was just waiting for the appropriate moment to take a revenge, which came in the following year. In 1449, Abd al-Latif attacked Samarqand and he succeeded in defeating his father, who became a fugitive of his own son. In addition to this, the religious authorities justified Abd al-Latif's deed in capturing his father, and deposed Ulugh Beg from power and finally ordered his execution.¹¹

After Ulugh Beg's removal from power and his execution, the crisis that was caused by the disputes and fights among ambitious relatives could have broken the continuance of the Timurid history. Abd al-Latif was murdered by his cousin, Abdullah, another grandson of Shah Rukh shortly after his father Ulugh Beg was killed. Abdullah could not enjoy his victory for long, since he was overthrown by Abu Said, who was a grandson of Miranshah, with a military support of the Uzbek khan, Abulkhayr. Abu Said turned out to be strong enough to maintain his power for more than a decade (1451-1469), although his power shranked to Transoxania eventually, after Abu al-Qasim Babur, another great-grandson of Timur, managed to take Khurasan and made Herat be his headquarters. By 1454, the territory of the empire fell into three parts eventually: Iran taken by the Qara-qoyunlu, Khurasan by Babur, and finally Transoxania by Abu Said. It is the good fortune of the Timurid rulers that the Uzbek Abulkhayr had no intention to attempt to occupy the remnants of the Timurid Empire. This made possible that a second golden age could commence in the Timurid history - albeit the empire remained divided among the Timurid rulers for the rest of the century.

After Abu Said's death in 1469, his son, Ahmed ascended the throne and ruled in Transoxania until 1494, then he was followed by another son of Abu

¹¹ As it was mentioned above, Ulugh Beg was a man of science rather than military actions. Ulugh Beg built three madrasas, in Samarqand (1420), Bukhara (1417) and Ghijduwan (1433), among which the one in Samarqand became a famous centre for mathematic and astronomical studies. It even had an astronomical observatory built in 1428. After all, Ulugh Beg made it possible for the Islamic astronomy to reach higher levels than it had been before. He also paid attention to religious sciences, memorizing the Quran, writing poets, and composing music.

Said, Mahmud, ruling until 1495, who was succeeded by his son, Ali. Their rules were assured by not personal political and military skills, but rather by the fact that the Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Moghuls and Kalmyks were still busy fighting each other in the north, while Sultan Husayn Bayqara, ruling between 1470-1506 in Khurasan, had no intention to attack Transoxania. Husayn Bayqara was a great-grandson of Umar Shaykh. He was famous for admiring arts and science, and in his court there lived scholars, painters, poets, musicians.¹²

While Herat was prospering under Husayn Bayqara, the Uzbeks in the north were getting more and more power under Muhammad Shaybani, threatening the last generation of the Timurids. Shaybani was a grandson of Abulkhayr, and thus, he was a Chinggisid descendant. He had great conquering ambitions, and succeeded in occupying more and more territories of the Timurid Empire. Unfortunately, the Timurid princes themselves were busier fighting each other than making an ally against the Uzbeks. By 1500, Shaybani managed to take all Transoxania under his rule, capturing Samarqand, Bukhara and Qarshi. Zahir al-Din Babur, who was a Timurid descendant on his father's¹³ side and a Chinggisid on his mother's side, was successful to re-take Qarshi and Samarqand, but these proved to be only temporary victories. After Shaybani regained his control in Transoxania, his attention turned to Khwarezm, which he eventually attacked in 1505-1506. His attack was a kind of warning for Husayn Bayqara to get prepared, however, Bayqara died suddenly in 1506. Babur, who at that time was in Afghanistan to establish a new principality for himself, was running to help the two sons of Husayn Bayqara in Herat, however, he found that Herat did not have the capacity to resist Shaybani, thus he decided to leave it before the Uzbek troops would reach it. Shaybani could take Herat with no difficulties. Babur, who had been dreaming of becoming the ruler in Samarqand some day, now had no choice but to flee to the East, first getting to Kabul, and then after defeating the sultan of Delhi, Ibrahim Lodi, at the battle of Panipat in 1526, he became the ruler of North India, which led to the birth of the Great Moghul Empire of Hindustan. Babur himself died four

¹² Among those, Jami, a great classical poet of Iran, and Mir Ali Shir Navai, who promoted the Chaghatai Turkish to become a literary language, can be mentioned as the most famous ones.

¹³ Umar Shaykh, a son of Abu Said.

years later in 1530, but eventually it is him who laid the foundations of a new empire that was ruled by his descendants until 1739.¹⁴

The outline above suggests that the history of the Timurids in Central Asia can be divided into the following parts. The first part becomes with Timur, the conquerer, who had to face two problems to solve in order to be an accepted ruler: one was to consolidate his power in Transoxania in a military sense, while the other one was a legitimacy problem of his realm. To reinforce his personal power among his followers, he decided to have recourse to different ways, such as creating an obscure administration structure that was mainly dependent of his person, as well as to keep his army in constant wars. Secondly, in order to make his rule legitimate, he found a way of how to become an accepted ruler in accordance with the Chinggisid traditions, while he was also making use of Islam. The second part of the Timurid dynasty refers to the post-Timur period with the irresistible spread of Islam - most strikingly seen during the time of Shah Rukh.¹⁵ It led to the fact that Shah Rukh did not have recourse to a Chinggisid puppet khan, in whose name he would rule. No longer were the Timurids a conquering dynasty, but rather a prospering one in arts and

¹⁴ Nonetheless, the establishment of a new empire in North India did not retain Babur's descendants from attempting to retake the lost Central Asian territories for more than a hundred years after Babur's death. The last attempt to regain the lost lands was during the 1640s, the time of Shah Jahan (1627-1659), however, it turned out to be such a disastrous failure that thereafter, no Indian Timurid ruler felt courageous enough to make an attempt to re-establish the Timurid rule once again in Central Asia.

¹⁵ Mihály Dobrovits points out the fact that in the second half of the fifteenth century, there were two interpretations of political power in existence: one refers to the attempt of Shah Rukh, who tried to strengthen his power through Islam, and therefore, tried to get rid of the Mongolian customs; while the other interpretation was to keep the Mongolian traditions alive in order to obtain true legitimacy in this way. This latter one was typical of Timur himself, as well as his successors, except for Shah Rukh. Dobrovits comes to this conclusion by studying the various versions of the Altan Debter, which versions refer to two different stories of the origin of the Timurid power. Nonetheless apart from the legitimacy problem of the Timurid rulers, Kauz points to the fact that the Mongol tradition was still present among the common people - at least during the first half of the fifteenth century.

science, bringing tranquility for the people in the empire. However, it had a heavy politico-cultural heritage that was left by Timur to his descendants. That is to say, the relationship to Timur was so obscure during his life-time that it led to a disagreement among his descendants, making claims for the throne along with numerous fights for it all along the Timurid history. This almost brought about the disappearance of the empire from the stage of history in the middle of the fifteenth century, however, it managed to survive due to some historical circumstances. This led to the second golden period, which was mainly represented by Sultan Husayn Bayqara in Khurasan. This period can be regarded as the third part of the Timurid history. However, the great-grandson generation of Timur did not prove to be skillful enough to make an ally and resist the Uzbek Shaybani's conquering ambitions, which put the Timurid power and history in Central Asia to an end.

1.2. The Ming China

Although it may seem to be self-evident from a modern nationalist point of view that the Yuan dynasty of Mongol origin had to be overturned by Chinese nationals in order to restore the Chinese order all-under-Heaven¹⁶, it was not that obvious in the fourteenth century. There were several factors needed to show up both in a legitimacy point of view and in the military conditions that eventually led to a Chinese national restoration of power in the country.

The Mongols under Khubilai Khan's leadership managed to occupy China during the 1270s and established a new dynasty there that changed both the lives of the conquerors and the Chinese population under Mongol realm for about a hundred years. The conquering Mongol army, however, was not big enough in number to cover such a huge country, therefore, they were mainly stationed in the north, close to the capital, while the armies of professional soldiers, mainly consisting of those coming from the time of the

¹⁶ The ancient Chinese expression to refer to *China* as the world under the Heaven (called *Tianxia* in Chinese). Sometimes, it referred to the whole world reaching well beyond the boundaries of China proper and its main cultural sphere in East Asia.

Jurchen Jin dynasty that was overturned by the Mongols in the 1230s, as well as those who surrendered in the fights during the 1270s, were stationed in the central areas, the south or southwest of China. These latter often had a Mongol or Central Asian commander in charge of supervising them. This kind of arrangement persisted throughout the Yuan dynasty with no significant change.

However, the once victorious Mongol army was not able to maintain its military power on a high level. It started to decline gradually from the end of the thirteenth century. One of the reasons for this decline can be considered to be the poorly administered military garrisons, which led to the weakening of military strength. The fact that the army was less and less capable to oppress local rebellions became quite obvious by the 1340s. It was not only the garrisons in the country-side the military effectiveness of which started declining, but also that of those being stationed at the capital, that is the imperial guards. The Yuan Chinese society was becoming less safe and more disorderly, leading to the weakening of social norms, without which a society could hardly be functioning smoothly. As a result, semi-military forces were being formed in local governments, while at the same time bandits were becoming stronger and stronger, making use of the weakening social order. Weapons, which had not been common to see among the peasants in villages, started spreading in the country-side after the 1330s, along with more and more men becoming good at using these arms. Many of these men eventually joined some local rebellion, instead of joining some governmental military establishment. The rapid spread of weapons throughout the country changed the society from a relatively peaceful one into a more and more militarized one since the 1330s, which process lasted until about the 1380s when Zhu Yuanzhang (the Hongwu emperor)¹⁷, the first Ming emperor

¹⁷ Zhu Yuan-zhang was born in 1328 in a village somewhere in today's Anhui province, spending his childhood in great poverty. His parents were fleeing from place to place, escaping from tax-collectors in default of paying tax, who finally came to the Huai region. By the 1330s, the Huai area became a kind of centre of the Red Turban rebellion movement, which managed to attract a lot of people from the population reduced to poverty, by talking about the coming of a better future.

The Red Turban rebellion was one of the sectarian movements in the Yuan China, which first appeared in the 1330s in Jiangxi and Hunan

finally managed to complete the reunification of the country under a pure Chinese sovereignty.

However, just like in the case of Timur, the way to reunite China under his own leadership took a very long time for Zhu Yuanzhang. While he was fighting the Mongols, he also needed to compete with rival rebel fellows. Based on the Cambridge History of China, the rise of Zhu Yuanzhang can be outlined in the following way:

1. As it was mentioned above, the militarization of the society since the 1330s resulted in the appearance of lots of men in the country-side engaged in martial arts and joining some rebellion group. There were two among these men rising over their fellow rebels who managed to become strong enough to compete for power. These were Zhang Shicheng and Fang Guozhen, both of them started out in banditry. They had divided China among themselves well before Zhu Yuanzhang virtually succeeded in declaring his ultimate victory in 1368. The interesting thing is that Zhu Yuanzhang himself did not show interest in joining any rebellion group in his early years - there were several factors that virtually made him do so in the end.
2. In 1344, there was a severe epidemic sweeping through the area, which was followed by locust invasion and drought. Noone in his family, except for one of his brothers and him, could survive it. He was just sixteen years old at this time. In the same year, he was introduced to a nearby Buddhist monastery as a novice. By doing so, he was actually fulfilling his father's promise to the monastery, which promise was made when he was just an infant. However, not very long after he moved into the monastry, he was compelled to

province and then reached half of China in ten-some years. It became popular in provinces where people were suffering from famine and epidemics, gathering men and women burning incense and worshipping the messianic Buddha Maitreya. However, the Red Turbans did not constitute a united movement, but it had several branches with different leaders. It goes without saying that these groups were considered as socially dangerous by the Yuan government and the elite of the society. The Red Turban movement finally became divided into two groups: a southern group and a northern group.

leave it with all other novices together to get their foods elsewhere. He returned to the temple in 1347 or 1348. During those years that he spent outside of the temple, he was wandering through the Huai region, and it is very probable that he heard lots of stories about the the Red Turban rebellion. It is also possible that it was the time when he became familiar with military skills, and it cannot be excluded that he even served in an army, presumably a Mongol one. After he went back to the monastery, he stayed there until about the age of twenty-four, studying Buddhist scriptures.

3. Entering the year that Zhu was about to become twenty-four the whole central Huai area turned into a turbulence, which was mainly caused by the Red Turbans. A district city, not far from Zhu's village, was taken by a group of Red Turbans in 1352. One of the leaders was Guo Zixing, who believed in the Maitreya doctrine deeply, saying that a better world was approaching. Guo was collecting fighters like himself. The Yuan government did not attempt to retake the city for a while. Instead, they sent poorly organized troops, which eventually plundered and burnt villages and temples, capturing local people who had nothing to do with the Red Turban movement. Zhu's temple was in the fighting zone, which could not escape being burnt. Zhu, who had fled before the temple was attacked, could only see its ruins. Shortly afterwards, he decided to join the rebels, who had been sending messages to him, under the command of Guo Zixing. This was the moment in his life which changed him from being a simple subject of the Yuan empire into a conscious rebel, and it would be just some historical speculation of how the history of the Yuan dynasty would have been changed if Zhu's temple had not been burnt by the Mongols.
4. In 1353, Guo entrusted him with an independent commission, which marked the beginning of Zhu's independent career. After a series of fights, Zhu managed to overtake Nanking in 1356, the name of which he changed into Yingtian (meaning in response to Heaven), while at the same time, the afore-mentioned Zhang Shicheng moved to Suzhou and declared that it would be his capital from that time. Not long after this, Han Lin'er¹⁸ appointed Zhu

¹⁸ Han Lin'er was declared to be the emperor of an expectedly restored

Yuanzhang to be the leader of Jiangxi province, and Guo Zixing's son became just a secondary leader. This latter, presumably not satisfied with the decision, hatched an unsuccessful conspiracy, and was executed. Since then, Zhu became the most powerful leader of the northern Red Turbans in the Yangtze area, protecting the candidate emperor, Han Lin'er. By doing so, Zhu became one of the leaders who were struggling for obtaining ultimate power. It was a turning point in his life again: changing from being a religious rebel into a political leader. However, at this time, he was still not the one who was expected to be the emperor, since it was Han Lin'er. Although Zhu's advisers suggested to him that he should turn away from the Red Turban movement that aimed at re-establishing the Song dynasty, he was not listening to them. He continued to use the symbol of the expected future Song dynasty, the Dragon Phoenix, until 1367 when Han Lin'er drowned while crossing the Yangtze. Thereafter, however, Zhu was reacting quickly, and the following year, 1368, he decided to abandon the symbol Dragon Phoenix in order to use a new one to represent his own dynasty, that is the Ming¹⁹.

5. It is a subject of debate of how much Zhu himself believed in the Red Turban religious ideology. However, it can be assumed that he was using those in the Red Turban movements to develop a positive image of him among the common people. He really needed them, since he was facing a legitimacy problem of his new realm in several aspects. First, he had to explain why to overturn the Mongols, secondly, he had to compete with rival rebel fellows. As for the first one, he never actually denied the legitimacy of the Mongol rule in China, but he was stressing that it was the time for the Mongol realm to be over, since they failed to keep the country in peace. This was nonetheless close to a Confucian way of justification, saying that if a ruler is not capable to fulfill his duties towards his people all-under-Heaven, he must leave. Secondly, while he was fighting

future Song dynasty in 1355 by the northern Red Turbans, taking the reign title of Longfeng (meaning 'Dragon Phoenix').

¹⁹ Ming means 'radiant', which has Manichean connotations suggesting that Zhu did not break all relations with sectarian doctrines.

his rebel fellows, he was striving to create a positive image of him among the people, by giving tax exemption in areas that suffered a lot from war damages, punishing soldiers in his army who were found pillaging, and even honouring the loyalty of his enemies. All these helped him be accepted by both the common people and the elite of the society.

When Zhu Yuanzhang proclaimed himself to be the new emperor of China in 1368, the fights with the Mongols in the north were far not finished yet. Toghon Temür, the Yuan emperor was in Dadu (today's Peking), and Zhu had to find ways to remove him. After Zhu was declared to be the emperor of a new dynasty, they sent edicts to the adjacent countries, informing them about the establishment of the new dynasty. However, it did not go so smoothly in some places such as Korea, which still continued to regard the Mongol rule as legitimate for about ten more years. Zhu Yuanzhang, who was ruling under the imperial name Hongwu after his enthronement, however, ordered the compilation of the Yuanshi, the official history of the Yuan period, in 1368, which compilation began in 1369 and finished in the following year, 1370. Consequently, the compilation was completed in a year or so, which shows light upon the fact that Hongwu (Zhu Yuanzhang)²⁰ intended to close the history of the former dynasty officially and start his new one.²¹

The question here is whether the newly established Ming dynasty could make a break with the Mongol traditions that had prevailed in the Yuan administration for a century or so, or to be more precise, in what degree it retained such aspects that were typical of the former dynasty's governing style. The question becomes quite relevant if one thinks of the fact that while the future-to-be emperor Zhu Yuanzhang and his rebel fellows were fighting the Mongols in order to get rid of them, they were also exposed to the politico-cultural atmosphere of their age that was characterized by the long Mongol realm. This might have made a peculiar change in the mind of

²⁰ Henceforth, Zhu Yuanzhang will be mentioned as Hongwu, regarding to the fact that he became the emperor of China.

²¹ An interesting fact concerning the speed of the compilation is that it had to be interrupted for a while until the records about the last Yuan emperor, Toghon Temür arrived.

those who had been once the subjects of this Mongol-origin dynasty. As it will be shown below, the Mongol rule in China did make essential changes on the Chinese mind so much that its effects did not vanish with the collapse of the Yuan dynasty. The most profound effects can be discovered in the attitude to a Confucian governing.

Edward L. Dreyer argues that the history of the Ming China can be divided into two parts according to the degree of how much these Mongol effects prevailed, and when they started to decline in the imperial administration. Therefore, he distinguishes an early Ming China period, which lasted until 1435, and another period when the Ming court found his way back to its Chinese Confucian origins. Dreyer outlines five aspects in which the Mongol effects can be grasped: military conquest, foreign affairs and foreign trade, the preponderance of military officers over civil officials, official appointment based on heredity, as well as the suspension of the civil service examinations. All these were challenging the Confucian view of how the world should be governed. The politico-cultural heritage of the Yuan government that had preferred Taoism or Buddhism to Confuciansim was immense in making an obstacle for the revival of the Confucian ideas after the Mongol collapse in 1368. Dreyer's arguments about the five afore-mentioned aspects can be summarized in the following way.

Confuciansim does not condemn the use of force in the case that it is used to oppress some rebellion or to resist a barbarian invasion, however, it deeply condemns using force in order to absorb new territories, that is wars of conquest. Consequently, Han Wudi and Sui Yangdi were both denounced by Confucian historians for having attempted to conquer territories outside Chinese borders. Two of the early Ming rulers were not exceptions either, since both the Hongwu emperor and his son, Zhu Di (the Yongle emperor)²² were men of wars - especially the latter one, making attempts to enlarge Chinese territories with non-Chinese ones. This was learned from the Mongol way of how to treat the areas near the borderlines of the empire. Nevertheless, it was done against the warnings of their Confucian advisers.

As for foreign affairs and foreign trade, according to ancient Confucian views, it was necessary to make other states submit to the Chinese court, and there were several forms to do so. Nonetheless, trading with them was not an ideal behaviour, since trading itself was not considered to be moral -

²² Henceforth, he will be referred to as the Yongle emperor.

regardless of whether it was done with foreigners or among the Chinese themselves. It had a connotation linked to the image of one's greed for financial interests, which contradicted the image of a moral person, *junren* in Chinese. Therefore, in the ancient Chinese social order, merchants stood at the bottom of the society that referred to a lower status than that of peasants and craftsmen. However, according to Dreyer, in early Ming China, there was no real agreement about this Confucian attitude. Although Hongwu did make attempts to make China become free of barbarian influences, his son, Yongle held quite an opposite attitude to this matter. Under his realm China was about to become a world power stepping outside of its borders. He was following the behaviour of the Mongols, who were apt to build relations with other peoples in Asia. In contrast to him, his Confucian scholars were of quite a different opinion, albeit not successful at all in persuading him.

The third aspect of the Mongol effects on early Ming administration is the dominant position of the military over the civil officials. As far as it is known, it may be for the first and the last time in Chinese history that people in high military ranks would stand above the scholarly stratum. Military itself was regarded as a necessary, but disdainful thing, consequently, it could not enjoy such a morally high position as that of the learned Confucian scholars. However, in early Ming China, military officers were higher in rank and were also paid better than scholarly officials. Military officers were holding key positions both in the central level and in the country-side. This was partly due to the effect of the former Mongol dynasty emphasizing the role of the military, and partly due to the fact that both Hongwu and Yongle needed to have recourse to military support to assure their success in getting to power.²³ That is to say, military played an immense role in the rising of early Ming China, which could be a second reason for why scholarly Confucians were put aside for several decades.

The fourth aspect was the fact that the official appointments in the military became hereditary, which was against Confucian attitudes again. According to Confucianism, officials should be selected through examinations, regardless of the social background of the applicants, based purely on one's personal abilities. Therefore, at least theoretically to say, the

²³ In the case of the Yongle emperor, the need for the support of the military will be discussed below.

official career was open for everyone. As it might be concluded from the train of thought above, however, it was a different case with early Ming China. The first Ming Chinese rulers made most of the military offices hereditary, creating a new class of military nobles standing above that of the scholarly officials. According to Dreyer, it is the Yuan practice that stood as a model for the early Ming rulers to make the military offices hereditary, however, one should not forget the fact either that Hongwu won his wars against the Mongols by depending on his military forces, so he was not in the position of neglecting them. Therefore, he decided to give them advantages even at the expense of the scholarly stratum. It can also be considered that Hongwu himself may have not really trusted Confucian scholars themselves, since Confucianism as an ideology of state-governing eventually did not give as much space for a ruler exercising his power as the Mongol rulers could enjoy by putting Confucian ideas aside.

The fifth aspect concerns the civil examinations. Civil service examinations were suspended by the Mongols, because they were considered to reinforce the Confucian ideology, which was thought to be threatening the freedom of rulers in power. Although it was re-established in 1384 during Hongwu's time, it was not done so immediately after his enthronement, which shows light upon his reluctance to have recourse to a Confucian practice that had been exercised for centuries before the Mongols. Instead of re-introducing the institution of civil examinations, he followed the Mongol example of recruiting through the recommendations of those who were already employed in the offices. The reason for Hongwu's reluctance becomes quite clear from what was written above, however, the answer to the question of why he finally decided to re-establish civil examinations lies in the fact that recruiting through personal recommendations of those in the offices did not prove to be effective enough. Hongwu came to the conclusion that it was the Confucian scholarly stratum only that proved to be competent enough to handle with official affairs.

What mostly makes Dreyer's work fascinating concerning the early Ming administration is that he argues that the early Ming China had a very strong military character in political decision-making, which was inspired by the former Yuan dynasty. As Dreyer says, it had a great resemblance to Turco-Mongolian empires, the Ottomans and the Mughals rather than to a native Chinese dynasty. In this respect, one can also add the Timurid

dynasty to these as one of those Turco-Mongolian empires, which fact throws light upon another parallel between the Timurids and the Ming Chinese - at least in their initial stages. The Timurid dynasty and the Ming China that were born on the ruins of the former Chingissid Empire were both influenced by the Mongols - partly in the legitimacy their empires, and partly in the militarist characteristics in their earlier times.

However, the militaristic behaviour of the early Ming China mainly refers to the reigns of Hongwu (1368-1398) and Yongle (1402-1424), who both had to gain their powers through hard victories, while Jianwen (1398-1402), a grandson of Hongwu, and Hongxi (1424-1425), Yongle's son, who both had a Confucian education and were representing the third generation of the dynasty, were reluctant to follow this militaristic attitude. However, neither of them could rule long enough to realize their ideas of reviving Confucian scholarly dominance in governing. Nevertheless, Xuande (1425-1435), Hongxi's son, who was the last of the early Ming rulers, attempted to make a balance between the military and the scholarly officials throughout his life. Thus it can be pointed out that there were attempts to restore ancient Confucian privilege in state-governing during the time of early Ming China that could have re-written the history known as it is today. However, due to several circumstances, these attempts turned out to be a failure, leaving the militaristic aspects dominant until 1435. One of those circumstances was that there was a high need to put emphasis on a strong military position in foreign affairs, because the Mongols in the north - although they were expelled outside Chinese borders - still remained strong enough to threaten the safety of the newly established dynasty. Yet in 1435, the scholarly stratum succeeded in getting over the dominance of the military elite after the death of Xuande. After his death, a child ascended the throne, who was put under the guardianship of an empress. This empress was listening to the scholarly officials only, which brought about the end of the privilege of the military elite. Since then, military units and military officers were put under the surveillance of the civil administration, and this power structure remained stable throughout the rest of the dynasty. This, of course, made serious effects on the foreign relations too, since trading was condemned as a disdainful activity. Trade became possible solely in the framework of tribute missions, as well as at designated market-places.

However, it is not only the militaristic features of the early Ming China

that makes this age in the Chinese history so peculiar, but it is the unique historical chance that was given to China to become a real world power stretching much beyond its original borders. The Yongle emperor had intentions to enlarge Chinese knowledge on the world and to enhance Chinese presence in remote countries. Yongle was eventually about to succeed in doing so, though he failed to realize it in the end. It can move one's phantasy on how the world would look like now if the Yongle emperor had succeeded in his ambitions. He was both a militarist and an adventurer, who did not spare expenses to send large fleets through the South Seas which could even reach Africa. These expeditions used up huge expenses that were not only borne by the imperial treasury, but also by the coastal provinces. They were led by eunuchs, with Zheng He being the head of them.²⁴

While Zheng He was crossing the South Seas, the Yongle emperor was fighting the Mongols in the north, whose military capacity was still fearful for the Chinese not to feel safe enough. Altogether, he launched five campaigns against the Mongols. These campaigns were partly on punitive purposes, partly in order to secure the northern borderline. The Ming troops

²⁴ The number of the crew was incredibly large, including more than twenty thousand people, taking luxury items such as embroiders, silk etc., which were meant to be given as gifts to local rulers they would meet on their voyages. These expeditions were not organized for military purposes, but rather for making allies, or to be more precise, these expeditions were supposed to look for treasure for the emperor, therefore, the ships were called treasure ships (*baochuan* in Chinese). But treasure was not the only purpose of these expeditions. They were also meant to extend the tributary system, to make relations with new countries and forcing them to acknowledge the supremacy of China. These missions were successful in the sense that they managed to expand the Ming Chinese influences to remote lands and defend Chinese interests, to make new countries enter the tributary system. These things resulted in attracting foreign envoys bringing tribute from numerous countries. These expeditions did bring lots of treasures and luxury goods, however, they mainly remained in the possession of the court, hardly seen any of them in the market-places. Those who came and brought tributes were paid abundantly and were also allowed to sell their goods in the capital. They were paid so much by the court that it finally resulted in financial deficit. The expenditures were higher than the incomes. Yet, this did not bring these expeditions to an end, at least not during the life-time of the Yongle emperor, whose political ambitions proved to be bigger than the deficit in the economy.

at this time were strong enough to fight the Mongols, however, these expeditions did not bring the expected results. Yongle was not able to defeat them, and he could not even maintain the border areas safe: Mongol raids continued taking place from time to time. Nevertheless, these military expeditions in the north demanded immense financial expenses too, just like Zheng He's marital expeditions on the seas, which made bad influence on the morale of the army.

Unlike his hostile attitude towards the Mongols, however, the Yongle emperor decided to use a quite different policy to the Central Asian states. He had no intentions to engage in wars with them, which might be considered as rather strange, since Timur attempted to attack China at the time when Yongle just commenced to rule as the third emperor. It is disputable how much he was aware of the possible severe consequences of Timur's intention to attack China. Presumably, not aware enough.

Nevertheless, Yongle's death brought about huge changes in China's foreign policy. China turned from being an expanding extrovert empire into a defending introvert one, abandoning unconsciously the possibility of becoming a world empire setting foot in countries in different continents. This turn-away, however, could have been expected, since the financial expenditures during Yongle's reign were so enormous that they could not be covered by the tribute missions from foreign countries. But the financial deficit may not have been the only reason. It can also be assumed that the Chinese came to the conclusion during these voyages that no culture of any country seemed to be more supreme than theirs, therefore, there would be nothing to be learned from the foreigners, consequently, there was no need of launching further expeditions. The centre of the world was thought to be in China - to be more precise, in its capital city. The farther one goes from the capital, the farther he gets away from the centre of civilization. In such a world conception, there is no need of carrying out risky and expensive huge missions. The Yongle emperor was the one who made an attempt to challenge this world concept, but he failed to hand his revolutionary thoughts down to his descendants. Obviously, this affected China's relations with Central Asia too.

After Yongle's death, China turned to a defensive policy, and the government started to focus on the border garrisons, especially in the northern areas around the capital. However, due to Yongle's great

expenditures on military campaigns, now China had to face a growing shortage in financial terms. Military officers warned the government of such shortcomings concerning the frontier defence, however, their warnings were not listened to enough. There was also a lack of a new strategic thinking, although the frontier garrisons had lost the half of the original number of soldiers by 1438. Along with this, the system of the military colonies (*tuntian*)²⁵ at the borderlines, which was supposed to support the military, started declining. On one hand, these colonies were exposed to raids from the north, while on the other hand, the government stopped providing them with things necessary for agriculture such as seed grains and animals, and ordered them to force-labour instead. Many of these soldier-settlers decided to escape. This phenomenon brought about the weakening of the military defence effectiveness during the 1430-1440s, which eventually led to the Tumu debacle, the successful attack of Esen²⁶ (the leader of the Oirat Mongols) on China in 1449, who even managed to capture the Chinese emperor.²⁷

²⁵ These military colonies were created during the reign of Hongwu, who found it difficult and dangerous to disarm the population after a long process of “militarization” in the country-side. Therefore, he decided to establish a hereditary military class of his soldiers, making them settle down in the military colonies. He divided them into two groups: those who had actual military duties, and those who were ordered to cultivate the lands. According to Mark Elvin, it can be assumed that about thirty percent of these “soldiers” in the borderline areas were ordered to do military duties, while about twenty percent of them inside the country were ordered to do the same. Their rate might reach fifty percent at the big cities.

²⁶ The Oirat Mongols became an undoubtedly dominant force in Mongolia after their leader Toghon defeated the Eastern Mongols’ leader Arughtai in 1434. Toghon had friendly connections with China, however, this situation changed after his son, Esen, got to power in 1440. Esen was successful in establishing a strong authority along the whole northern Chinese borderline area during the 1440s.

²⁷ Esen launched a large-scale attack against China, which had underestimated his military dominance among the Mongols, while overestimating the strength of the Ming forces. The Chinese emperor, Zhengtong (1436-1449), who was just at the age of twenty-two in that year, was suggested to by Wang Zhen (a eunuch commander) that the emperor himself should lead the Ming forces against the Mongols, which turned out to be a fatal decision. Due to Wang Zhen’s ill-considered advise, the whole army was destroyed, and the emperor was captured by the Mongols at a

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that China might have not been in real danger due to the lack of an enemy strong enough to bring the whole of China to its knees, the capture of the emperor was a great shock to the court after all. The court had to reconsider its defence policy. The control over the garrisons was extended from the responsibility of the eunuchs to the bureaucracy at the capital, which increased the surveillance of the capital officers over the garrisons that were put under a unified command. During the Chinghua period (1466-1487), and to some degree in the Hongzhi period (1488-1505), the court made an attempt to establish a forceful defence stance all along the northern borderline, which proved to be effective enough to fight the Mongols in the frontier zone. They also reinforced the Great Wall, building new walls to the those already existing.²⁸ Throughout this period, the Mongols were disunited, covering a huge area from Xinjiang to Manchuria. Various kinds of nation in the north besides the Mongols such as Uighurs, Jurchens, Koreans, as well as Central Asians etc. sent envoys

place called Tumu, not so far from Xuanfu, a large Chinese garrison. Esen probably was not prepared for such a high-level booty as capturing the Chinese emperor, which fact could have made him take the capital Peking easily. However, he decided to return to where he came from along with the taken emperor, and attempted to force the Chinese court to give him ransom for their emperor. However in the meantime, the Chinese court made a decision to raise a new emperor to the throne in order to soothe the army and the population. Since Zhengtong's son was still an infant, the choice fell on his younger brother. He was elected to be the new emperor very soon, receiving the name Jingtai (1450-1456) as his reign name. Nevertheless, this led to a severe conflict about the legitimacy of power between the brothers later in the middle of the 1450s, when Zhengtong finally managed to return to China. Esen did not intend to kill him - on the contrary, he wanted to send the (ex-)emperor back to Peking as soon as possible. Zhengtong finally managed to get back to the throne in 1457 when Jingtai fell severely ill. It gave a chance to the ex-emperor to restore his power, and rule until 1464.

The reason for why Esen sent the unfortunate emperor back to Peking is that he had no intentions to attack and occupy China - his army was not large enough to do so. He was content with the profits obtaining from the Chinese through trading at the border markets or in returns for the tribute missions. Briefly to say, the Mongols' real interest at Esen's time was not the territorial occupations, but to maintain economically favourable relations with China.

²⁸ The Great Wall in its present form was completed during the Ming times, the building of which was promoted by Esen's unexpected attack.

regularly to China in the phramework of the tribute system. The tribute bearers were interested in enlarging the size of their embassies and the frequency of their comings, since they were treated so well by the Chinese that it was very beneficial economically for them. On the other side, it meant a great burdon on the Chinese treasury.

The reaction of the Chinese court to the capture of the emperor by Esen in 1449 can be considered as reinforcing the defensive policy of China in the northern frontier areas, which policy first came to the foreground after the death of the Yongle emperor. In the second half of the fifteenth century, although China was not as strong militarily as in the first half of the century, it managed to find its way back to the military capacity that could resist the raids of tribes from the steppes. However, the power of Chinese authorities could not reach beyond the Great Wall thereafter.²⁹

1.3. Making a parallel between the histories of the two empires

Before starting to discuss the concrete relationship of the two empires, it seems to be useful to make a parallel between their histories, since one can find remarkable similarities besides the obvious and huge differences.

First of all, as it was afore-mentioned in several places, both empires were born on the moribund ruins of the former Chingissid Empire during the second half of the fourteenth century. To say “ruins” in the case of the Mongol Yuan dynasty may sound exaggerated, since it was very much alive when Zhu Yuanzhang and other rebel fellows were fighting the Mongols. But it was not as powerful as at the time it was established, and was not even capable to tackle with the deterioration of the social order that started in the 1330s, predicting the collapse of their realm in China before the end of the century. Unlike Zhu Yuanzhang, Timur did not need to fight a united army, since he was born two years after the collapse of the united Chaghatai ‘ulus’ in 1334. However, it is a startling fact that the social upheaval and

²⁹ What comes to the history of the Ming China in the sixteenth century is not the subject of the present dissertation, since the power of the Timurid empire in Central Asia ceased to exist at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

deterioration started in the 1330s in both cases, which created opportunities for charismatic leaders to grasp the power and rule by establishing new dynasties. From this point of view to see, maybe it does not seem to be a surprising fact at all that Timur and Zhu Yuanzhang were men of the very same age³⁰, but it is a surprising fact that both of them reached the significant moments of rising to power at almost the same time³¹. Thereafter, the careers of the two dynasty founders became different, since Timur started to engage in wars of conquer in later times, while Hongwu (Zhu Yuanzhang) focused on consolidating the foundation of his new dynasty. Yet, the two empires still had something common even after 1370, and this was the militaristic feature of them as a common heritage of the Mongols³². It is also a startling fact that the Hongwu emperor and Timur died only with a few-year difference at almost the same age, around seventy.

Moreover, it is also interesting to see that both rulers were first followed by one of their grandsons³³, neither of which could survive longer than two or three years. It is hard to predict what direction the Timurid history would have taken if Pir Muhammad had not been killed, but it can be assumed that the militaristic feature of the early Ming China might have come to an end, since the Jianwen emperor preferred the scholarly officials to the military officers. Nonetheless, both grandsons were replaced by their uncles, sons of the founders, and both of them proved to be rather stable in ruling.

The first half of the fifteenth century was hallmarked by Shah Rukh in the Timurid Empire, and by the Yongle emperor in the Ming China, albeit

³⁰ Zhu Yuanzhang (the Hongwu emperor) was only eight years older than Timur.

³¹ Zhu Yuanzhang proclaimed himself as an emperor in 1368, while Timur became the de facto ruler in Transoxania by 1369-1370.

³² Putting aside the scholarly stratum, and giving privileges to the military officers, that is a distrust in Confucian ideas as governing principles in early Ming China.

³³ In the case of the Ming China, the Hongwu emperor originally intended to appoint one of his sons, Zhu Biao, as his successor, but since he predeceased his father in 1392, therefore Hongwu's choice finally fell on Zhu Biao's younger son, Zhu Yunwen (the future Jianwen emperor). However, Jianwen could not rule for long. In order to consolidate his power, Jianwen made an attempt to destroy the feudal principedoms, beginning first with the weaker ones. He eventually provoked an internal war, in which he was finally defeated by his uncle, the prince of Yan, Zhu Di, the later Yongle emperor.

the former one's time in power turned out to be about twenty years longer. In the first half of the fifteenth century, one can see a similarity in the historical process of the two empires: there was a deviation from the Mongol heritage in state-governing. However, this turning point did not happen at the same time, which makes a remarkable difference between Shah Rukh and the Yongle emperor. In the case of the Timurid dynasty, it is the time of Shah Rukh when the empire was turned into a sultanate, in which Islamic civilization started to prevail, bringing tranquility in the empire instead of plunging the country into a series of war. This also meant a deviation from the militaristic character of the founder's time. In the case of the Ming China, however, the Yongle emperor was not just a militarist from top to toe, but it was during his realm that China had a unique historical chance to expand its cultural borderlines, and by doing so, he even surpassed his father's deeds. Nonetheless, after Yongle's death, to be more precise, after 1435, however, the early Ming China lost its militaristic feature by giving privilege to the scholar-officials over the military officers. Consequently, sooner or later, both the Timurid dynasty and the Ming China that had shared common features in their early times, showed a turn-away from their militaristic features inherited from the Mongols into a more pacific characteristic. Nevertheless, these turn-aways differed from each other in direction, since the Timurid dynasty oriented itself towards Islam,³⁴ while

³⁴ Nevertheless, the Mongol heritage in Central Asia could naturally sustain much more obviously than in China, which can be seen in its veering-back after Shah Rukh. Ulugh Beg oriented himself towards the Mongol *yasa* rather than the Islam *sariat*, and during his reign, Turco-Mongol customs were still strong among the population. Moreover, the legitimacy of a ruler according to his relationship with the Chinggisid genealogy remained important along the history of the Timurid, as it can be seen in the case of Babur, the founder of the Great Moghul Empire, who was both of Timurid and Chinggisid origin. But, the eventual restoration of the significance of the Chinggisid genealogy in Central Asia took place in the time of the Uzbek conquerer, Muhammad Shaybani, under whose attacks the Timurids were squeezed out of Central Asia. Shaybani was the grandson of the afore-mentioned Abulkhayr, whose Chinggisid lineage went back to Chinggis Khan's grandson, Shibani. The origin of the name Shaybani goes back to the name Shibani, but its pronunciation was distorted by Muslim historians as Shaybani. Consequently, in Central Asia there was no such a sharp turn-away from the Turco-Mongolian heritage itself, being an inherent culture, unlike in China, except for the time of Shah Rukh. What

the Ming China found a way back to its Confucian roots. By doing so, the two empires started to deviate from each other in their characters too.³⁵

However, what comes after this consolidation in power and deviation from the Mongol heritage gives occasion for another startling similarity in the histories of the two empires. It is the year of 1449 when both empires were forced to face a serious challenge in their historical existence, albeit for quite different reasons. In the case of the Timurid Empire, due to the uncertainty of the order of succession, Ulugh Beg's death brought about a series of murders until Abu Said succeeded in seizing the power finally. It is the fortune of the Timurids that the Uzbeks did not take the excellent opportunity at that time to destroy the Timurid power ultimately and take their lands. It extended the time for the Timurid presence in Central Asia for another fifty years or so. However in the Ming China, the turmoil caused by Esen's attack was not followed by an internal turbulence in China. Esen could become temporarily successful just because the Chinese defence effectiveness in the frontier zone became much lower after Yongle's death, but neither was Esen's army strong enough to conquer the whole of China, nor did he intend to do so, therefore, he decided to leave Chinese territory after looting the frontier zone. It goes without saying that Esen could have been the bane of the life of the Chinese court in Peking if he had decided to go on with the unwantedly captured emperor and attack the Chinese capital. Eventually, both empires got over these interludes of 1449, and the Timurid Empire in Central Asia commenced to have a second golden age hallmarked by the reign of Sultan Husayn Bayqara in Khurasan, while China, learning from the shock caused by the Tumu incident, it became very cautious with the barbarians: it reorganized its military and fortified the defence stance along the border areas.

After making an outline of the separate histories of the two empires, as well as making a parallel of their historical processes, the next step now is to make an overview of the concrete relationship between the Timurids and the

comes common in the two empires is the turn-away from their militaristic characters during the first half of the century.

³⁵ There is an interesting similarity again in that the capitals were changed in both empires during the time of Shah Rukh (from Samarqand to Herat) and Yongle (from Nanking to Peking).

Ming China, and attempt to describe what these empires were meaning for each other.

1.4. The Timurid-Ming relationship

The first striking change after the establishment of the Ming China is that while the Yuan China guaranteed free trading with the states outside its borders by abolishing the Chinese institutions of controlling the relations with the “barbarians”, the Ming government re-established the ancient institutions by closing the borders and making an attempt to monopolize foreign relations by the court. It led to an end for private people to travel free across the borders - at least theoretically. This old-new practice led back to the way of what foreign relations had been like before the Yuan dynasty, that is to say, the re-establishing of the Chinese world-view of “considering China as the centre of civilization and the states around it as its vassals”. At least, this was the official (Confucian) world conception, around which all diplomatic relations were arranged. Therefore, the newly emerged Timurid Empire was born at the time when the Ming China had recourse to old practices: a strict Chinese control all along the borderlines, the monopolization of foreign affairs by the Chinese government, creating narrow diplomatic channels with foreign countries, as well as the Chinese demand to other states to acknowledge its supremacy. These all limited the free activities of foreign countries with China to a great extent, forcing them to stand on unequal terms with China. These limitations were eventually challenged by the founder of the Timurid Empire towards the end of Timur’s life-time by planning to attack China - albeit unsuccessfully. The Chinese limitations were a part of a well-determined foreign policy, in which foreign relations were classified into different categories. The Timurid dynasty was addressed by the Chinese in the framework of this foreign policy, against which they only had two choices: submitting or resisting. In contrast to the Chinese foreign policy, however, the Timurids never had a united foreign policy - not to mention a united China policy, which was partly due to that the unification of the Timurid Empire was at a lower degree than that of the Ming China, and also partly due to the Timurids’ politico-cultural orientation towards Southwest Asia instead of East Asia. Yet, the lack of a

China policy among the Timurid rulers did not result in having no relations with China. On the contrary, they maintained vivid contacts. However, it is worth noting that the two empires had totally different attitudes to each other: a highly determined foreign policy on the Chinese side, and a much less clear foreign (China) policy on the Timurid side. Along with this, they also had different expectations to each other.

In accordance with the unbalance in the foreign policies of the two empires, one can find much more materials produced in classical Chinese concerning the relationship of the Timurid dynasty and the Ming China than in Persian. Therefore, due to a well-determined foreign policy of the Chinese court, as well as the preponderance of Chinese sources, the scholars of modern times are forced to address the subject of the relationship of the two empires from a Sinological point of view rather than from a Timurid one. This fact led to the birth of numerous studies focusing on the relationships from the Chinese side rather than on the other one.

Although there will be an attempt made to describe the relationship of the two empires in a bilateral way, it seems to be unavoidable to put more stress on the Chinese point of view, which results in finding the answer to the question of what the Timurid dynasty, or to be more precise, Central Asia meant for the Chinese. The reason for such a kind of inclination of the description becomes clear from what has been said above. Yet, this inclination can even be considered as valuable for the scholars of the fifteenth-century Central Asia, since the judgement of the Timurid dynasty by a foreign state, that is China in the present study, can make contribution to the studies on the Timurid Empire too.

In order to understand the diplomatic phramework in which China was handling foreign matters, there is a need to outline the types of its foreign relations. During the Chinese history, there emerged four kinds of relationship between China and other states. The first one referred to a kind of appointment-system (cefeng tizhi), in which a foreign state turned into a subordinate position with China by accepting the title (waichen) given by the Chinese ruler. The second one referred to a kind of ally-system (huimeng tizhi), which meant allies based on marriages between the Chinese court and foreign dynasties. Although these allies could have led to stable relationships, they were not dominant throughout the Chinese history. The third one referred to a relationship (chaogong tizhi), in which foreign states

were paying tributes to the Chinese court at regular times. This meant a kind of official diplomatic relationship, however, the rulers of such states were not regarded as the vassals of China - at least, it was not emphasized in this kind of relationship, albeit the supremacy of the Chinese emperor was unspokenly beyond the matter of debate. The fourth kind of relationship (*tongshang guanxi*) referred to simple commercial relations, which did not lead to regular diplomatic relations, unlike the third one above.

In an attempt to arrange the relationship of the Timurid dynasty and the Ming China in the phramework of the four types above, one could hesitate to refer it to either the third or the fourth type. This ambiguity goes back to the fact that the third type of the relationship shows light upon political aspects, while the fourth one points to - simply to say - commercial ones. The relationships with the Timurid dynasty eventually had both aspects, that is they were both political and commercial, but their dominance was different in different periods of time. However, the following fact can be made clear: the Timurid rulers never became vassals of the Chinese empire the way it is described in the first and second type.

The official³⁶ channel was basically realized in two forms. One channel was through embassies, sent from one government to the other between the two capitals³⁷. The other one was realized in the frontier zone, more precisely, at the borderlines at designated border markets. Other relations were not officially admitted by the Chinese court. The two kinds of channels differed in the sense that while the foreigners could go for trading at the border markets freely, those who were eventually allowed to enter Chinese territory became limited in number. China was controlling the foreigners setting foot on its land so much that the foreign envoys were never left without Chinese surveillance all along the way to the capital. Most of these embassies entering China were so-called tribute-bearers, therefore, they had political aspects, while those at the border markets had commercial ones. In

³⁶ That is to say, the channels legalized by the Chinese court.

³⁷ About the way from the border to the capital, one can obtain detailed information from Giyat ad-din al-Naqqash's narrative of an embassy sent by Shah Rukh to Peking, which turned out to be one of the most detailed works about China in the Islamic world. It does not only describe the route to Peking, but also the staying in the capital (including the meeting with the emperor). This embassy represented the peak time of the Timurid-Chinese relations.

a similar way, Chinese “citizens” were not allowed to leave China without an official permission either, which ban affected especially the Chinese merchants negatively.³⁸ The Chinese court attempted to keep the borderlines under its control in order to cut China off foreign influences, and this practice did not eventually change all along the fifteenth century. It is another matter that there are signs for that reality must have been highly different from the Chinese official ideal situation.³⁹

There was a remarkable feature of these Chinese-foreign relations, namely, that China regarded itself as the centre of the world, and by doing so, it was forcing foreign states to accept a subordinate position in their relationship with China - tacitly or not. The embassies from foreign states to China were always outnumbering those from China to them, which resulted in a strong bias in the direction of these embassies. In this respect, the relationship between the Timurid dynasty and the Ming China was not an exception either.

³⁸ In reality, Chinese merchants are reported to have reached even Aksu.

³⁹ Although the official Confucian standpoint despised trading on the base of moral issues, China was forced to trade with the “barbarians” to meet its needs concerning a very specific item of goods: horse. China was never good at raising horses of good quality throughout its history, therefore, China was highly dependent of the nomads supplying it with horses that can be used in battles. Horses were usually bargained for tea, a product that was desired by the nomads, which led to a specific kind of trading called ‘tea-horse trading’ (chama maoyi). When the Ming China was established, tea-horse tradings were taking place in the southwest of China, but after the capital was moved to the north, and trading with the nomads resumed, the centre of the tea-horse trade was put back to the northern areas. The tea-horse trade was under strict control of the Chinese court. There were tea-horse markets in the frontier zone, however, not in the Mongol frontier, but in the northwest of Shaanxi in three places: Xining, Hezhou and Taozhou. The markets took place once every three years in large quantities. The Chinese bargained tea (as well as salt and textiles) for getting horse, the most of which were raised in the Qinghai region. After the Tumu incident in 1449, these trades became suspended for a while, but during the reign of the afore-mentioned Tianshun emperor, they continued. However, in the last third of the century, the state monopoly over these trades started to weaken. In the 1470s, the horse trade in the border area was carried out gradually by private merchants producing tea. At the end of the fifteenth century, around sixty percent of the tea-horse trades were carried out directly by private Chinese merchants.

Ralph Kauz gives an excellent insight into the diplomatic relations of the two empires, focusing on the historical process. Kauz mainly made use of the *Mingshilu*, which he regards as the main source for studying the relationship of the two empires, completing it with some other sources too. While Kauz remains addressing the official relationship mainly throughout his work, in some places he also makes reference to phenomena that go beyond it, such as information-gathering (or spying), smuggling and trading (including men, women and children) etc., which show light upon a much more realistic way of the relations that could not be grasped otherwise by studying the official relationship only. Kauz's work discussing the historical process of the relationship of the two empires in detail is quite unique in its kind. Morris Rossabi's unpublished dissertation⁴⁰ of 1970 also gives a historical insight of the matter, however, he focuses on the role of Hami rather than solely the relationship with the Timurid Empire itself, stressing that Hami was the funnel of all these relations, since all embassies had to go through this city. The two researches complement each other, because while both discuss the historical development of the (mainly diplomatic) relationship of China and Central Asia, they also show light upon different aspects. Kauz's work focuses on the political side of the relationship, while Rossabi's dissertation discusses the economical one. Based on these two researches, completed with other articles written on the subject, it becomes possible to give a brief summary of the relationships, focusing on the main characteristic features. The description below will attempt to give an outline of these main features in a chronological order of the development of the relationship.

To trace back the initial Timurid-Ming contacts, one has to go back as early as the 1370s, the time when the newly enthroned Hongwu emperor made attempts to establish connections with the states in the West. As it becomes clear from the *Mingshi*⁴¹, Hongwu sent envoys to the West, but without eventual results. It may be not a surprising fact that Hongwu was eager to make connections with foreign states, since he needed to strengthen the legitimacy of his power - even though he was stressing the Chinese supremacy. It cannot be excluded that the Hongwu emperor, who had just

⁴⁰ Entitled *Ming China's Relations with Hami and Central Asia, 1404-1513: a Reexamination of Traditional Chinese Foreign Policy*.

⁴¹ *Mingshi*, 332. *juan*.

drove the Mongols out of power in China, was very much aware of a newly forming power in Central Asia, that of Timur. In spite of the remote distances, Hongwu might have been concerned about this newly emerged Turco-Mongol power in a political sense, which could become a potential enemy of China. This hypothesis cannot be proved without necessary documents from that age, yet I would like to stress that there is no need to exclude the possibility of such an early concern of the Ming China about the political situation. My personal assumption is that the relationship between the Timurids and the Ming China might have been more vivid than one can assume from the survived sources.⁴² Ralph Kauz also came to a similar conclusion when discussing the abilities of the Chinese intelligence system, saying that in spite of the great distances, the Chinese seemed to have been informed surprisingly well about the events far beyond their borders.⁴³

Of course, the hypothesis about Hongwu's possible political concern in the 1370s about the new Turco-Mongol empire in Central Asia remains as a hypothesis until newly found documents can support it. However, presumed that there was a more vivid information-flow between the peoples of East and Central Asia than what could be assumed from the remaining documents, it would be rather strange to see the first Ming emperor

⁴² For instance, the dynastical history of the Ming China, the *Mingshi*, was compiled during the eighteenth century, that is well after the Ming dynasty ceased to exist. Although it contains lots of information on the Western Region, there are several mistakes in these descriptions. Such a kind of mistake concerns Herat, which was transcribed in two ways into Chinese, one is as Halie, while the other one is as Heilou. The Ming Chinese officials apparently were aware of the fact that both referred to Herat, however, the compilers in the eighteenth-century Qing era seem to have not known about this fact any longer, consequently, they treated these two transcriptions referring to two separate cities.

⁴³ Of course, it cannot be concluded that the Chinese were always well-informed about the political situation in the Western Region. For instance, Song Sheng, a Chinese general, was given orders to get prepared for the attack of Timur one month after Timur had actually passed away in Utrar. It is not difficult to imagine that if Timur had not died during his campaign-route to China, the Chinese could have been attacked easily by him. Kauz mentions another example about that the Ming Chinese court sent an embassy to Khizr-Khoja in 1402, not knowing about that Khizr-Khoja had already died three years ago. These blunders throw light upon that the Chinese were not always well-informed about certain political events.

unconcerned about the political development of Central Asia. But even if one inclines to argue that Hongwu was not so much concerned about Timur in the 1370s, and that Hongwu had no other intentions by sending embassies to Central Asia in the first years of his reign than just to declare his enthronement as China's new emperor, it is still a fact that Timur had no response to Hongwu throughout the 1370s. It seems to be almost sure that Timur was much less concerned about the birth of a new Chinese dynasty than Hongwu might have been about that of the Timurid Empire. Actually, in the first twenty years or so after the foundation of the two empires, there were no diplomatic contacts between them. Timur was busy somewhere else, and therefore, he did not even attempt to make contacts with the Ming Chinese court.

In 1387, however, Timur suddenly sent an embassy to China⁴⁴, bringing two camels and fifteen horses as tribute, which was followed by two others in the next two years with a much bigger scale of horses as tribute. These embassies represented the initial contacts from Timur. There were eleven tribute missions⁴⁵ altogether during his life-time from Samarqand - the last one came to Nanking in 1397. It was the time when Timur had been already turning hostile against China, and the pacific relations of the former ten years became a thing of the past.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ By this time, Timur had been far beyond the initial problems of reinforcing the foundation of his power both inside and outside of Transoxania, having conquered such territories as Mazandaran, Khurasan and Sistan.

⁴⁵ These tribute missions were referring to a kind of acceptance of the Chinese supremacy on the surface, which put Timur into a subordinate position against China, however, it can be considered too that these missions were actually carried out in the purpose of spying on China, gathering information about its strength for a possible attack on it at later times.

⁴⁶ Before continuing to discuss the possible reasons for Timur's change in attitude to China, it is worth taking a look at the year of 1388. 1388 was the year when the Chinese army managed to defeat the last serious forces of the Chinggisid power at a battle near Buyur Nor, in which the Chinese captured many people of them. Among them, there were several merchants from Central Asia, who were thought to come from Samarqand by the Chinese. They were taken first to the Chinese capital and were given permission for trading, but later they were returned by the Chinese court to Central Asia. As Kauz argues, the Hongwu emperor became suspicious about them, thinking that these merchants might be spying on China.

As for the change in Timur's attitude to China, there is an exchange of two letters between Timur and the Chinese court coming into the foreground as a possible explanation. First in 1394, there was a letter sent from Timur to the Chinese emperor, in which he was praising the supremacy of China and the Chinese emperor, while he was calling himself a humble vassal.⁴⁷ The problem with this letter is that most of the modern scholars do not regard it as a real one or at least not as an honest one.⁴⁸ Since it appears to be doubtful that Timur would have ever considered himself as a vassal of China, his letter can be assumed as a forged one⁴⁹. But before admitting that it must have been just a forged letter, one should remember the fact that Timur at this time was still busy in the West⁵⁰, which must have been making him focus on consolidating his power at the other end of Asia. Consequently, he may not have intended to get into confrontation with China at this time. On the other hand, however, the tone of the letter may sound too humble for such a successful conquerer as Timur, therefore, the assumption of that it was just a forged letter cannot be excluded at all. Forged or not, however, the Chinese court treated it as real, and it must have been to the court's satisfaction, because they decided to dispatch an embassy with a reply letter to Timur in 1395.⁵¹ This embassy turned out to be a fatal mission. The letter that it was carried to Timur addressed him as a servant submitting to China, expressing the Chinese court's appreciation

⁴⁷ The tone of the letter is surprisingly humble, in which he admits the Heavenly Mandate of the Chinese emperor, and he expresses his happiness about that the Chinese ruler made the way to China easier to go on by sweeping away the obstacle in the roads, connecting the rest stations together etc.

⁴⁸ Nonetheless, as it will be shown in later pages, there are also scholars who do regard this letter as honest.

⁴⁹ To be more precise, it can be assumed that this letter may have been altered by a Chinese official who was in charge of translating it into Chinese, and who might have been afraid of translating the original contents of the letter, which contents are supposed to be much less favourable for the Chinese court.

⁵⁰ Between 1392 and 1394, he was leading campaigns in Fars, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Georgia, Baghdad, and then in 1395, he was fighting the Golden Horde - actually for the second time.

⁵¹ It was led by Fu An, Liu Wei, Guo Ji and Yao Chen, accompanied by 1500 soldiers. Among these envoys, it is Fu An, whose name became cited the most frequently.

for Timur's submission. The letter apparently made Timur furious, since he detained the envoys who were not willing to carry out the 'koutou'⁵² and behave as servants of Timur. Timur took Fu An with him to his campaigns for several years in order to show him the greatness of his empire. Fu An and other survivors⁵³ could not return home as long as Timur was alive, which took about ten years of their lives to stay in the Timurid court.⁵⁴ In the meantime, since there was no news about Fu An's embassy after their arrival at Timur's court, the Chinese decided to dispatch another embassy in 1397⁵⁵ to find out what happened to Fu An and the others. This embassy was detained by Timur too, just as in the case of Fu An, and had no choice to return to China before Timur's death.

As for Timur's change in his attitude to China, one can assume that it was a reaction to the letter sent by the Chinese court in 1395 that must have made Timur become furious about its contents. However, there is also a

⁵² The way of expressing one's subordinate position to a ruler in greeting him by bowing the way the head touches the floor.

⁵³ Not many of the members of the original embassy could survive those long years in the Timurid court: only ten-some people could return home finally of the original 1500 people after Timur's death. But what becomes a much more interesting fact is that there is no written report of Fu An about what he might have seen and heard during those long years, being taken by Timur throughout the empire. This is highly strange, since China may have been interested in hearing about Fu An's experiences, which could be unique in its kind, and therefore, highly valuable. Fu An, however, might have made at least oral reports about his experiences, but it still remains a highly dubious fact of why there has been no sign for any written report by him. For a lack of it, the most valuable Chinese report about Central Asia at that time becomes the Chen Cheng accounts, which were written only a few years after Fu An was released and could return to China.

⁵⁴ At least, this is the way it is reported in the Chinese sources. Clavijo, a Spanish envoy in Timur's court at that time reports about the hostile attitude of Timur towards the Chinese envoys, humiliating them by making them sit on the lowest seats. However, Kauz points to another version of the reception of Fu An's embassy that was written by Yazdi. Yazdi reports about Fu An's reception by Timur in just the opposite way. According to his report, Fu An and the others were treated well and then allowed to leave. However, Yazdi's report shows some inconsistency with what happened after that, so it remains a kind of mystery of why the Chinese sources along with that of Clavijo, and Yazdi's report differ from each other so much.

⁵⁵ It was led by a certain Chen Dewen.

possibility that Timur actually had had ambitions of attacking China since much earlier, but he had to be patient with waiting for the right moment to turn against China directly. The time the Fu An embassy arrived in Samarqand with that fatal letter, Timur was too busy with fighting elsewhere in Asia, therefore, he had no energy to spend on the issues on the Eastern side of his empire. If so, the letter brought by the Fu An embassy was not the real reason for Timur's attempt to attack China in 1404-05.

Timur's attempt to attack and conquer China could have turned out to be the only armed clash between the two states, but Timur's ambition this time remained unsuccessful, and China managed to avoid a new serious threat against its sovereignty. The question here is how much China was aware of this new threat. In the Chinese sources, which scholars in modern times can use for studying this question, there is not much written about Timur's planned attack.⁵⁶ One reason for this may be the fact that Timur's attack came to grief before doing any harm to China, consequently, by the time when the Mingshi was compiled in the eighteenth century, his attempted attack may have turned out to be irrelevant. Another possible assumption is that the Chinese were really not aware of the significance and the possible outcomes of an attack by Timur. But if so, it would contradict the hypothesis that the Chinese had been well-informed about the political situation in Central Asia.⁵⁷

Anyway, what becomes important here is that Timur's hostile attitude since 1397 and his planned attack in 1404/1405 did not lead to a break in the relationship between the two empires. On the contrary, after Timur's death, the Timurid-Ming contacts did not just become stable, but they also started flourishing for two decades or so. First of all, Khalil Sultan released

⁵⁶ Timur's plan for attacking China was reported to the Chinese court by a certain Muslim called Daowu according to Chinese sources. The so-called "barbarians" played a significant role in providing China with information about the events beyond its territories. It can be assumed that these informants were mainly not Chinese, but foreigners. However, the speed of forwarding valuable news to the Chinese might have been slow in many cases, which can be seen in the fact that the court ordered its general Song Sheng to get prepared for Timur's attack one month after Timur eventually died in Utrar.

⁵⁷ Nonetheless, the internal war in China had been over by 1405, thereby, Yongle's power had become stable. This could have promoted information access about Central Asia.

the Chinese envoys - the survivors of the two Chinese embassies that had been detained by Timur a decade ago, who arrived in Nanking in 1407.

After a change in the power in the Timurid Empire⁵⁸, Shah Rukh sent envoys to the Timurids, and Fu An, who had just returned to Nanking from a long-time captivity, was ordered by the emperor to go again. Another embassy in 1410 from China to Herat took a letter from the emperor to Shah Rukh, in which the Chinese emperor expressed his standpoint about the relationship between China and the Timurids, claiming that Shah Rukh was a vassal of the Chinese court. Shah Rukh, however, as a Muslim ruler, got angry with this claim, and refused creating a subordinate relationship with the Chinese. Interestingly, this interlude did not cause a break in the flow of the embassies, unlike in the case of Timur in the mid-1390s. The two rulers apparently did not want to get into conflicts with each other, but they wished to resume sending embassies to each other. The relations were so vivid that the embassy from China to Herat sent in 1414 turned out to be the most significant one for the Chinese, not because of some special political or commercial achievement, but because of the reports written by Chen Cheng, a member of the embassy, about the geography, local products and customs of places the embassy went through.⁵⁹ This embassy can be regarded as the forerunner of the embassy coming from Herat, Samarqand and other cities to China in 1420, which produced one of the most significant Muslim sources⁶⁰ on China. The accounts by Chen Cheng and Naqqash

⁵⁸ There was only once in the history of the two empires when the Chinese emperor made an attempt to intervene into the Timurids' internal affairs. The Yongle emperor called Shah Rukh upon to put an end to the war between himself and Khalil Sultan.

⁵⁹ The first report is just a diary of the route the embassy was taking towards Herat, called *Xiyu xingchengji*. This one is less valuable in information about Central Asia than the other one, titled *Xiyu fanguozhi*, which contains a description of more than a dozen cities the embassy visited. It starts with Herat that takes nearly the half of the full length. I made a full translation about both accounts that I intend to address in a separate study in detail (*"Xiyu fanguozhi és Xiyu xingchengji: két korai tizenötödik századi kínai forrás Közép-Ázsiáról"* in *Sinológiai Műhely*, forthcoming). These two reports provided the Chinese court with significant information about Central Asia at that time, however, the Chinese travellers at later times could rely on them less and less as the political situation was changing in the course of time.

⁶⁰ The antecedents of this grand embassy is that the Chinese emperor sent a

complement each other in the sense that they show light upon the relationship between the two empires from two different standpoints: a Chinese one and a Persian one.⁶¹

During Yongle's time, there were twenty missions from Herat and Samarqand, thirty-two from various Central Asian oasis states, thirteen from Turfan and forty-four from Hami.⁶² These embassies brought metal, jade, horses, camels, sheep, lions, leopards etc. to the Chinese court, which provided them with fine silks, textiles, silver, different kinds of luxury goods etc.⁶³

The embassy in 1420 may remark the peak of the relations, which started to take new forms after the Yongle emperor's death due to a series of change in the internal affairs and foreign policy of China. As Kauz draws attention to the declining relations in his work, the first documented critique by a Chinese official about these foreign embassies comes from the year of 1424, just a short time after Yongle's death. This critique was formulated by a representative official, Huang Ji, who put an emphasis on the insufficient tributes, illegal trades, deceptions, high costs for the administration and the army, as well as burdon of the population.⁶⁴ Kauz

letter to Shah Rukh in 1418, in which he treated the Timurid ruler as equal with him. This means a great change, compared with the tone of the letter sent a few years earlier, the significance of which will be addressed on later pages. Nevertheless, the Persian embassy to China in 1420 was addressed in the form of the tributary system in Peking, which shows light upon the fact that although the Yongle emperor might have agreed in treating Shah Rukh as an equal ruler in diplomatic letters, in the Chinese capital there was no exception given to any foreign embassy in their treatments. They were all treated as vassals of China, which was the only way of handling foreign missions - at least on the surface.

⁶¹ What makes these accounts peculiar is that they were written by a few-year difference, consequently, they inform us about the Chinese and the Timurids in the same period of time.

⁶² The Cambridge History of China, p. 261.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 261.

⁶⁴ The Ministry of Rites was in charge of the foreign embassies coming to China - mostly in a financial meaning. That is to say, the ministry of Rites had to take care of those who were allowed to enter Chinese territories on the border, and were accompanied along a determined route to the capital. These foreign envoys were fed all along their staying in China, which costs huge money in sum. Moreover, the goods that were given by China to these envoys in return to their tribute-items were higher in values in many cases,

also draws an attention to the rivalry among the Chinese ministries, in which the Ministry of Rites⁶⁵ was representing a more and more hostile attitude to these foreign embassies, while the Ministry of Military Affairs regarded them as important in order to keep the “barbarians” calm. On the other hand, for the Chinese court itself, these foreign embassies meant a kind of prestige, through which the Chinese supremacy could be preserved - albeit on the surface.⁶⁶

After Yongle’s death, the foreign policy of the Chinese court became rather defensive and passive, which made an effect on the Timurid-Ming contacts in that no more embassies were sent from China. This did not change until the afore-mentioned Zhu Qizhen could get to power for the second time as the Tianshun emperor in 1457. He became highly cautious with the “barbarians”, and attempted to look for allies.⁶⁷ However, as for the second half of the century, the foreign policy of the Chinese court mostly remained defensive and passive. It seems that the emperors were willing to accept even useless gifts like lions etc. in order to avoid the repetition of another Tumu incident, which shows light upon the fact that the court did not follow the advice of the Ministry of Rites to put these costly tribute missions to an end once and for all.

1.5. Summary

Looking at the two sides of the Timurid-Ming Chinese relationship, it can be summarized in the following way.

Firstly, one can see a sharp difference in the elaboration of a foreign

which were considered by certain Chinese officials as a deficit. Therefore, the critiques by the Ministry of Rites against these foreign missions cannot be traced back solely to some xenophobic hostile attitude, but to very reasonable facts indeed.

⁶⁵ In the Chinese sources, one can see a growing unsatisfaction about the worsening quality of the goods brought to the Chinese as tribute. There was a general dissatisfaction among the Chinese officials about animals such as lions and leopards that were thought to be expensive and useless.

⁶⁶ The embassy sent by the Chinese in 1433 turned out to be the last one for more than a decade or so.

⁶⁷ He immediately dispatched an embassy to the Timurids in the year of 1457.

policy between the Timurids and the Ming China. The Ming Chinese foreign policy was much more elaborated, which was partly reflected in the well-distinguished administrative functions addressing foreigners. Although there were contradictions in the interests among the various ministries, as well as between the ministries and the court, it still represented a kind of unity in policy-making. On the other hand, the Timurid dynasty could not show up a united and elaborated foreign policy, which was also due to the fact that the Timurid Empire was much less united as an empire than the Ming China. This resulted in that these embassies were less controlled by the Timurid court. This weak control led to the fact that there were lots of embassies coming to China that actually pretended to be sent from the Timurid rulers. To put in other words, there were many embassies that were not real diplomatic embassies, but so-called pseudo-embassies of Central Asian merchants who wished to trade with China, therefore, they went so far as to forge documents and claim that they had been sent by some Central Asian ruler. For them, the commercial profits of trading with China were so enormous that the number of such false diplomatic embassies was increasing in the course of time. This was further promoted by the weakening of the central Timurid power from the middle of the fifteenth century after Ulugh Beg's death.

As for the Timurid rulers themselves, although commercial interests might have been the most important ones - just like in the case of Central Asian merchants, one can see other interests too. For instance in the case of Timur, the embassies between 1387 and 1397 may have been significant in providing Timur with information on China too, helping him get prepared for his plan to attack China at later times; while for Shah Rukh, these Chinese embassies were important to help him legitimize his rule among the peoples of Central Asia⁶⁸, among whom China still enjoyed a huge respect. However, as for the Timurid rulers after Shah Rukh, it seems to be difficult to outline what their attitudes might have been like to these embassies, since the Timurid historical works do not address the relationship with China after the 1420s, and Chinese sources do not seem to be helpful either.

Secondly, in spite of the fact that the Chinese foreign policy was much more elaborated than that of the Timurids, there are three aspects that

⁶⁸ Kauz assumes that Shah Rukh may also have intended to use these embassies to spread Islam in China.

made modern scholars contemplate about in order to grasp the attitude of the Chinese court towards the Timurids. One concerns the matter of prestige, which stood on a Confucian basis, saying that the Chinese ruler as the Son of Heaven was the supreme leader of the world, therefore, the leaders of the “barbarian” countries could be nothing but vassals of China. Prestige had been a significant matter throughout the Chinese history. Another aspect is a military one⁶⁹ - not in a conquering meaning, but rather in a defensive one. China had been facing the attacks of the neighbouring nomads since ancient times, therefore, it had to address defence matters in its foreign policy effectively. The defence policy itself, however, was not limited to reinforcing the frontier zones and carrying out punitive campaigns against the nomads raiding the border areas, but also realized in the diplomatic relations: in the forms of tribute missions and imperial embassies. The third aspect of the Chinese foreign policy was a highly commercial one, in spite of all Confucian disdain. China needed certain goods, especially horses of good quality, which it could not obtain without trading with the nomads. Therefore, the keywords in the Chinese foreign policy were: prestige, defence and trade. The Chinese attitude to its neighbours was reflected through these three aspects. The question here is how the scholars of modern times have treated these three aspects, that is to say, which aspect have been considered by them normative and dominant - a so-called guiding principal - in the Ming Chinese foreign policy to the Timurid dynasty. This question has been addressed in different ways by different scholars.

⁶⁹ Or rather a political one.

Chapter Two

The Timurid-Ming research in the Western literature

In the present chapter, I will make a review of the studies concerning the relationship of the two empires in the Western literature, by analysing the theories and approaches applied in each of the studies. As it will be seen, there have been only a handful of researchers dealing with the contacts between the Timurids and the Ming China to a greater or smaller degree, which number looks small beside that of the researchers having studied only either of the two empires. Yet, as I will point to it, even this small number of researchers has succeeded in achieving significant results. These results are not only valuable for themselves, but it is also worth placing them into a wider context and comparing them with the results and standpoints of other intercultural studies on Central- and East-Asia. Yet, there has no study of this kind been carried out yet. This can be considered a regrettable – but fortunately not an unimprovable – fact. Therefore, the secondary purpose of the present study is considered to draw attention to the applicability of studies on the Timurid-Ming relationship in a broader context, as well as promoting the development of such comparative future-studies⁷⁰

It seems to be necessary to clarify the difference between ‘theory’ and ‘approach’, since these two concepts are intended to refer to two different view-points. ‘Theory’ in this study refers in the first place to the ‘theorisation-level’ of the research results of the respective studies, that is to say, I intend to find answers to the question of in what degree the research results in the respective studies are attempted to put into a theoretical phramework in describing the Timurid-Ming relationship. But, the theoretical aspect is not intended to refer solely to the ‘theorisation-level’, but also to its ‘contents’, which makes the meaning of the ‘theoretical aspect’

⁷⁰ This applicability will be explained in detail in Chapter Five, which chapter is not only devoted to make a summary of my study, but also to show light on further possible research lines.

in the present study two-folded. However, while the former one (theorisation-level) will be made clear in each of the discussed studies, the latter one (contents) will be addressed only in cases when the theorisation-level of the respective studies reaches a certain degree. As for the concept of ‘approach’ in the present study, it is related to the three kinds of aspect of the Timurid-Ming relationship clarified in the former chapter: cultural, political and economical ones. That is to say, I will investigate what approaches are used in the respective studies, and how they enlarge our knowledge about the Timurid-Ming relationship.

In the present chapter, there will be thirteen studies presented and discussed in various lengths mainly according to their theorisation-degrees and academic contributions. These thirteen studies were selected after a careful consideration of their significance in the matter in order to present the accumulated academic achievements and the present research-state. These studies will be divided into three parts from a thematic point of view, each addressing a particular topic. In the first one, which pertains to *related* subjects of the Timurid-Ming research, I will present the studies that deal with the most important Chinese embassy to the Timurid court in the year of 1414, led by Chen Cheng, Li Xian and Li Da. To be more precise, I will address studies that deal with the two accounts of Chen Cheng⁷¹, which accounts turned out to be the most significant ones in the study of the Timurid-Ming history, besides the Mingshilu. Therefore, no wonder that it has aroused the curiosity of modern scholars. Although the theorisation-level of these studies is usually low, they are to be regarded as highly important in their academic contribution in several aspects.

Western studies on the Naqqash account as a counterpart of the studies on the Chen Cheng accounts are to be considered to fit the topic of the first part in the present chapter as well. The reason for my decision not to address them here along with the studies on the Chen Cheng accounts does not lie in a negligence of them, but in the fact that the Naqqash account mainly aroused a linguistic interest in the Western literature rather than a historical or anthropological one - unlike in the case of the Chen Cheng accounts. Consequently, Western studies on the Naqqash account do not seem to fit the subject of the present dissertation, which aims at addressing and discussing the theories and approaches concerning the Timurid-Ming

⁷¹ The accounts of the Xiyu fanguozhi and Xiyu xingchengji.

Chinese contacts in modern studies. Nonetheless, studies on the Naqqash account will be addressed in the third chapter when discussing the Japanese research on the Timurid-Ming relationship, since they attempt to reveal some of the characteristics of the relationship.⁷²

The second and third part of this chapter will be devoted to show the development of the research of the Timurid-Ming relationship in a historical order, starting from the late eighteenth century to recent times.

The second part is divided into two smaller parts: one addressing the initial studies and their characteristic features until the appearance of the first theory in the early twentieth century, while the other part refers to the appearance of the tribute theory, which theory seemed to serve as a trigger for the second wave of the Timurid-Ming research from the late 1960s. The peculiar point concerning the tribute theory is that its appearance was not thanks to some analysis on the Timurid-Ming relationship, but to studies on the Chinese-foreign relations in the Qing dynasty, therefore, it does not seem to fit the subject-matter of the present study at the first sight. However, without discussing the meaning and background of the tribute theory, it is not possible to understand the development of the studies on the Timurid-Ming relationship in the second half of the twentieth century, therefore, it seems to be indispensable to make a brief detour and explain about the significance of the tribute theory before discussing the Timurid-Ming research from the 1960s.

The third part can be considered as the most significant one, discussing the studies in the latter half of the twentieth century, since this is the time when striking changes took place both in the theorisation-level and in the 'approach'-aspect. Nonetheless, this is the time that one can see a rising concern among the scholars in addressing the matter of the Timurid-Ming relationship too, although it is still hard to speak about a boom in the matter.

The fourth and last part of this chapter is devoted to be a summary of what will have been discussed and pointed out about the respective studies,

⁷² As for the Western studies on the Naqqāsh-account, see the study of Ildikó Bellér-Hann (1995), who gives a detailed description of the various Western editions and translations of the account (such as Quatremère [1843] into French, Rehatsek [1873], Yule [1914] and Maitra [1934] into English) as well as debated subjects among Western scholars about the original text etc.

their contributions to the Timurid-Ming research, as well as to give a general assessment of the Western scholars' research achievements as a whole.

2.1. Studies on the Chen Cheng accounts

Wolfgang Franke calls the two accounts of Chen Cheng the most important sources of Chinese knowledge about the Central Asian cities and states in the early fifteenth century. The significance of these two accounts can be seen in the fact that they were used as reference for journeys by Chinese scholars and envoys to Central Asia at later times too - even when the actual political and cultural conditions in Central Asia changed so much that the information in the Chen Cheng accounts could hardly be used any longer. Yet, these accounts became widely read among the Chinese scholar-officials - even incorporated into several other official works such as the *Mingshilu*, the most important Ming Chinese source on Sino-foreign relations. These accounts can be regarded as the counterparts, or even as the forerunners of the Naqqash account written just a few years after Chen Cheng had submitted his to the Chinese court. Therefore, it seems to be useful to make a comparative study on the two Chinese accounts and that of Naqqash in a separate research in order to show light upon not only the questions of how these accounts complete each other in giving information of those times, but also make clear the similarities and differences in the way of historical writings in the Timurid and the Chinese empire. The fact that the dates of the accomplishment of these accounts stand so close to each other could promote the appearance of such a comparative study, however, there has no such a comparative study really ever emerged yet.

As it was afore-mentioned, what makes the Chen Cheng accounts particular is that although there were several Chinese envoys sent to Central Asia who then presumably must have made reports to the court about what they had seen and heard, no written reports have really survived to modern times. The majority of these reports must have been made orally. For instance, in the case of Fu An, who spent more than two decades in Central Asia during his numerous missions⁷³, it becomes highly strange that

⁷³ He spent twenty years or so in detain. In his first mission, he was

he left no written accounts of his experiences. If he had done so, his accounts could have become at least as useful as that of Chen Cheng, or even more, and modern scholars may have paid more attention to him than Chen Cheng.

It is not clear whether the emperor himself or someone else ordered Chen Cheng to make a written report of his mission in 1414-15. It can be assumed that he decided to do so on his own - on behalf of his own sake, since Chen Cheng stood on the wrong side in the Chinese internal war between the Jianwen emperor and the future-to-be Yongle emperor for the throne at the turning point of the fourteenth-fifteenth century. Chen Cheng started his official career in the late period of Hongwu's reign, in the 1390s, but he could not avoid a break in it in 1402 when Yongle seized power. Therefore, Chen must have regarded the imperial order to be sent to Shah Rukh in 1414 as an opportunity of "remedying" his earlier mistake and recover his scholar-career. To accomplish a travel account about the embassy, therefore, seems to have served Chen Cheng's desire to reinforce his position in the officialdom, by showing himself as a devoted official. In this sense, this first mission after the start of a new era with Yongle's reign became highly important for Chen Cheng, which turned out to be so successful that he was ordered to go three more times to Central Asia⁷⁴ - though he never produced such a kind of written reports on his travels any longer. One might assume that it was no longer Chen Cheng's interest to keep writings about his experiences, since he had been "rehabilitated" already, but it can also be assumed that after having accomplished the two accounts, it did not seem to be important to make new ones for a while. In either case, even with these two accounts, Chen Cheng did far more than any other Chinese officials in the fifteenth century, which helped him inscribe his name upon the pages of history.

detained by Timur in 1397 and could get home as late as 1407, while in his sixth and last mission he was detained in Beshbalik for another nine years.

⁷⁴ "Successful" here must be taken cautiously, because most of the envoys were not really happy about receiving orders to go to Central Asia, since the way to there was still regarded as dangerous - as it is pointed out in Hecker's study to be discussed below. However, due to Chen Cheng's break in his official career after 1402, it must have been a different situation, and therefore, the fact that he was sent to Central Asia four times during Yongle's reign can be rendered a kind of "success".

As it was afore-mentioned, the Xiyu fanguozhi contains a description of Central Asian cities, starting with Herat, the new Timurid capital in various aspects. Chen Cheng devoted about the half of his account to describe this city, in which he addresses its architecture, the everyday life of the local population such as some of their customs and habits, the bazars and public baths, as well as the administration briefly etc. This particular attention to Herat is quite understandable not only because Shah Rukh was residing here, but also because the Chinese embassy with which Chen Cheng came together stayed about two months in Herat, so Chen had enough time to deepen his knowledge about the Timurid capital.⁷⁵ Moreover, Chen Cheng could move freely in Herat, which also provided him with an opportunity to get familiar with the local conditions.⁷⁶ This caused a bias in his account at the expense of other Central Asian cities. The Xiyu xingchengji, Chen Cheng's other account, is a diary of the way he took to the Timurid capital.

The original accounts had been thought to be lost until 1934 when the original manuscripts were found in the library of a Mr. Li in Tianjin, and then three years later, they were reprinted in Peking in the Shanben congshu edition. Therefore, his accounts succeeded in avoiding the fate that the original manuscript of Naqqash had to bear. Their discoveries made it possible to complete the versions found in the Mingshilu, Mingshi and others, which proved to be much shorter than the original ones. Although the significance of these accounts was understood immediately, it took five decades until the first - still not a complete - translation finally appeared.

This first translation was accomplished by Morris Rossabi and published in 1983 in the Ming Studies, which is to be regarded as a blissful deed. With this first attempt, Rossabi eventually took on a task that should have been done much earlier. However in the translation of the Xiyu fanguozhi, Rossabi addressed the part of Herat only, while leaving the Xiyu xingchengji completely untranslated. The reason for why Rossabi did not feel necessary to continue his translation about the other cities is because - while he admits the fact that Chen Cheng's account helps modern scholars obtain a

⁷⁵ On the contrary with Herat, he spent only a week in Samarqand.

⁷⁶ This fact makes Chen Cheng's staying different from that of Naqqash in Peking, where the foreign embassies were always kept under close surveillance in a fear of foreign spying on China. Consequently, Chen Cheng and Naqqash could experience each other's capitals in different ways.

better understanding about the reactions of a Chinese scholar-official and also about those Central Asian cities of that time - Rossabi claims that the latter half of the account about the respective cities are so brief and skimpy that they can hardly give new valuable information about these cities. Probably, for the very same reason, he did not think important to make a translation of Chen Cheng's diary either, since it contains even less information - or almost nothing - about the Central Asian cities. Rossabi's standpoint cannot be denied categorically - particularly in the case of the *Xiyu xingchengji*, yet I am of the opinion that both accounts deserve a full translation not only for those who would like to get a deeper knowledge on the matter for further studies, but also because these accounts as the most important sources of that period are valuable in themselves, therefore I believe that they should not be left untranslated. In accordance with this belief, I decided to carry out a full translation⁷⁷ of both accounts⁷⁸.

In recent times, one can see the birth of some concern in Chen Cheng's accounts in Uzbekistan too. Although strictly geographically to say,

⁷⁷ As for the part of Herat, I often consulted Rossabi's translation, and I found some differences in the interpretation of the text - albeit just a few, which differences I will address in a separate study. Altogether, Rossabi's translation proved to be highly helpful as for the translation of the part of Herat. Nonetheless, the translations of the latter part of the *Xiyu fanguozhi*, as well as the whole text of the *Xiyu xingchengji*, were carried out without consulting other translations, therefore, they were accomplished completely by myself. Since the part of Herat takes only about one quarter of the sum of the two accounts, three-quarters of the total of the texts were translated completely independently - albeit the language of the *Xiyu xingchengji* is much easier than that of the *Xiyu fanguozhi*. Nonetheless, these translations have been carried out under the very careful guidance of Barnabás Csongor.

⁷⁸ Well after having completed these translations - in recent times, did it come to my knowledge that there had appeared a full Russian translation of the *Xiyu fanguozhi* by Pankratov. I have not compared his translation with mine yet, however, I intend to do so, before making a final check on my own version. Nonetheless, it seems to be that Pankratov made only a translation of the *Xiyu-fanguozhi* with very few comments. Moreover, I learned of the existence of a German translation of the Chen Cheng accounts by Bruno Richtsfeld, who wrote his master thesis on this matter in 1985. However, since I failed to have access to his translation, I could not compare it with mine. Both the Russian and the German translations were drawn to my attention by Ralph Kauz.

Uzbekistan does not belong to the so-called Western countries, therefore, it apparently should not be addressed in this chapter, however, due to its close ties with the Russian scholarship, as well as due to the fact that I intend to discuss the Japanese and Chinese literature in different chapters, I regard it as useful to address it in the present one. Natalia Karimova⁷⁹ seems to have devoted much of her time to the research of Chen Cheng, Hami etc. Karimova's paper entitled *Chen Cheng's Travels to Samarkand* was written in order to draw attention to the significance of Chen Cheng's travel accounts. Karimova both gives brief translations of certain cities - although not all of those cities in the *Xiyu fanguozhi* - and brief comments on the historical background of the early fifteenth-century Timurid-Ming relationship. Karimova does not make clear her standpoint about how the relationship of these two states should be approached, or what aspects of the relationship could be considered relevant. But there are two points that make her paper particular. The first one is that she does not address the part of Herat, that is to say, she does not make an extracted translation of the part of the Timurid capital, despite the fact that she intends to show light upon the significance of Chen Cheng's accounts. This omission of Herat can be considered unfortunate, however, from an Uzbek point of view to see, Samarqand must be more relevant for the people there than Herat, which might have motivated Karimova to choose the title *Chen Cheng's Travels to Samarkand*.

The second one is of much greater significance. Karimova asserts - based on the work of a modern Chinese scholar, Yang Fuxue - that Chen Cheng's first travel to Central Asia was not in 1414, but much earlier, in 1396. This, however, contradicts the present knowledge about Chen Cheng's first travel. Even the date of 1396 is a bit dubious. It must refer to the embassy sent in 1395 from the Chinese court to Samarqand, led by Fu An etc., and which embassy ended up in so disastrous conditions. If Chen Cheng had participated in this mission, then he could have come back to China as late as 1407, thereby, he could not have stood on the wrong side in the Chinese

⁷⁹ As I heard directly from Karimova, she was about to submit her dissertation on the matter of the fifteenth-century Central Asia, but due to some difficulties in the communication with her, I could not learn about what subject exactly she was working on, therefore, it would be highly blissful to know about the results of her main work after she has accomplished it.

internal war among the Jianwen emperor and the later Yongle emperor. Consequently, he could not have fallen out of favour after Yongle got to power and need not have become so eager to recover his official career. Felicia J. Hecker, who wrote a study on Chen Cheng's career and his missions to Central Asia, mentions the fact that Chen Cheng, who became a *jinshi* in the year of 1394, was sent to the West in 1396, however, he was not sent to Samarqand, but just to the northwestern border in Kansu province - with a military mission - in order to reinforce guardposts against the Mongols and Uighurs. Shortly thereafter, according to Hecker, he was sent down to the southern ends of China, to modern Guangxi. The possibility of that Chen Cheng would have been sent to Samarqand in the year of 1396 must be excluded.

The first study on Chen Cheng, however, was published in the middle of the 1970s, when Rossabi made an attempt to illustrate the significance of Chen's achievements as an envoy, as well as his two accounts with regard to the Ming Chinese foreign affairs. Rossabi in his study investigates two Chinese envoys in the early Ming period, in which one subject refers to Chen Cheng, while the other one to Isiha, an envoy of foreign origin. Rossabi asserts that while the Chinese envoys throughout the Chinese history were usually not in a position to lead negotiations on their own, independently of their rulers' precise orders, and who were also at a low status in the Chinese society due to an official and universal Confucian disdain of foreign relations, these envoys still managed to play an important role in resolving disputes between China and foreign countries, initiating trade with them, as well as obtaining vital intelligence reports on other countries, which all seemed to be of high value for the emperors in various Chinese dynasties. The number of envoys dispatched to both adjacent and remote countries in the early Ming times was especially high, among which not only those missions to the Southern seas hallmarked by the name of Zheng He were of peculiar importance, but also those to Inner Asia too. As Rossabi notes, although these missions were not without an official scorn among the Chinese scholars, yet the missions of Isiha and Chen Cheng seem to have been exceptions, since the accounts of their travels - at least some parts of them - are incorporated into the Ming official records. Due to this special attention by the compilers of the official records, Isiha⁸⁰ and Chen Cheng's

⁸⁰ After Hongwu managed to make the former Mongol governour submit to

achievements did not fall into oblivion.

Rossabi in his study discusses the roles of Isiha and Chen Cheng in the Ming-foreign relations separately, yet in one well-defined theoretical phramework. He intends to show through the achievements of these envoys that the general view in modern times, according to which the traditional Confucian Chinese world order was so dominant that the political and economical significance of Chinese and foreign envoys were hardly understood by the Chinese court and Confucian officials, can be challenged effectively, pointing at the Chinese-foreign relations in the early Ming

him in 1387, Chinese attention was turned to the Jurched in southern Manchuria. Yongle came to the conclusion that there was a high need for the help of the Jurched in order to reinforce the safety at the northeastern frontier zone. Furthermore, the Yongle emperor sought for Jurchen horses, furs, coveted gerfalcons, ginseng etc., and by 1405, the Jurched came into a tribute-trade relationship with the Chinese. In the year of 1409, Yongle, who was making preparations for a campaign in the northeast, sent Isiha to the "Wild Jurched" to reinforce good relations. About Isiha himself, there is not much written in the Chinese official records. There is no separate chapter of his life, he is only mentioned in the biography of an other eunuch. From the fragmantery sources about him, Rossabi reckons that Isiha himself was a Jurchen and may have been caught by the Chinese in a battle between the Ming court and the Jurched in 1395, and that he was a relative of the ruling family of the Wuzhe guard. Rossabi notes that Isiha's early missions were quite successful for the Chinese court, arguing that the court did not only trust these foreign envoys at Chinese service, but they were also aware of their values in the foreign relations. According to Rossabi, the fact that Isiha could speak the Jurchen language, and that he was familiar with the Jurchen customs must have made contribution to the development of the Ming-Jurched tribute-trade relationship, which promoted the creation of a peaceful frontier zone - at least in the early Ming times. However, after the Yongle emperor died in 1424, the peaceful relationship between the Chinese and the Jurched went wrong, which also affected Isiha's last two missions negatively. The last mission took place in 1432 on the occasion of the enthronement of a new Jurchen ruler. The Chinese court decided to send him a seal and a Chinese rank, as well as presents to him, in order to make official relations with the new ruler. Although Isiha himself was given some influential position in 1435, the relationship with the Jurched kept going worse and worse. The Tumu incident, in which Esen even captured the Chinese emperor, must have led to a growing suspicious attitude of the Chinese court towards even their loyal foreign servants. Isiha was eventually relieved of his service by the court after the Tumu incident, but he managed to avoid being executed. (See Rossabi, 1976, pp. 4-15.)

period. Rossabi's choice for Isiha and Chen Cheng can be regarded as very fortunate due to two reasons. One is that Isiha's missions to the Jurchen refer to the relations at the northeastern borders of China, while Chen Cheng's missions to those at the northwestern frontier zone, as well as remote Central Asian cities. The other one is that while Isiha was an envoy of "barbarian" origin, Chen Cheng was a Chinese envoy from top to toe, with a strong Confucian sense of moral, which moral glimmers at some places in his travel accounts. These two features show light upon that regardless of whether it was about the northeastern or the northwestern region, as well as regardless of an envoy being Chinese or of "barbarian" origin, the role of the envoys was of high significance - which fact can be well understood by studying the early Ming period. Rossabi's theory is of high value, which I intend to discuss on later pages in the present chapter. Here below, I would like to refer to his study on Chen Cheng's life and his accounts only.

In the section of Chen Cheng, Rossabi first gives a brief historical background of the relationship of the early Ming and Timurid Empire, in which he assumes that although there were eventually no military conflict between Shah Rukh and the Yongle emperor, the worldviews of the two rulers were so different that actually there was a possibility for that their relationship would result in great strains.⁸¹

As for Chen Cheng's life, Rossabi mentions that Chen, after obtaining the degree of *jinshi* in 1394, took government service, and from that time, he was given orders from the government that made him get into contact with foreigners, and thus become familiar with foreign customs. Rossabi asserts that Chen Cheng was given such tasks as founding guards in Anding, Aduan and Quxian in the northwestern frontier zone. Although Rossabi does not mention the year when Chen Cheng was sent to the northwest, it must refer to the year of 1396 - the disputed year discussed above in Karimova's study. Moreover, Rossabi assumes that Chen Cheng could have spoken some foreign languages, though there is no recorded proof of it.

As for the *Xiyu xingchengji*, Chen Cheng's diary, Rossabi reckons that there is very little information about the cities Chen Cheng passed through,

⁸¹ This note of Rossabi, though it is not discussed by him in detail, is to be considered important, and it will be addressed again on later pages, when discussing the development of theories and approaches among the Western scholars.

however, Rossabi also admits that at some places, Chen gives some details of what he had seen, heard, or observed, which can give the reader a glimpse of his travel.⁸² Rossabi draws attention to the difficulties of the travel described in Chen's diary, saying that although Chen's embassy was not attacked by bandits, it suffered from climatic and geographical difficulties, such as going through deserts, and meeting snowstorms.⁸³ Moreover, Rossabi also assumes that Chen spent about two months in Herat.⁸⁴

As for the *Xiyu fanguozhi*, Rossabi focuses on Chen Cheng's observations. For instance, Chen seemed to be highly interested in the economic and commercial aspects of the empire, such as the bazaars, the currency, the natural resources etc. Moreover, as it will be addressed on later pages, Rossabi stresses the fact that Chen Cheng was interested in the animals of the area, since China needed various animals both for economical benefits and military defence, especially horses. Furthermore, Rossabi draws attention to Chen Cheng's Confucian sense of moral, who found it surprising among others that there were no ancestral shrines in the city, and was shocked to see the "ill-behaviour" of women, which was so different from the "proper" behaviour of Chinese women, as well as that Chen was disdainful of ill-trained doctors. Besides, Chen also gave a description of the religious aspect of life in Herat, such as the Ramadan, the Mullahs, dervishes etc. On the other hand, Rossabi also draws attention to that although Chen as a Chinese envoy was supposed to meet the Timurid ruler Shah Rukh, he does not write about his meeting(s) with him, but just about the ruler's bedroom. This is very interesting indeed - just like the fact that there is also very little written by Chen about the administration system of the Timurid capital.

But, what is more strikingly missing from Chen Cheng's accounts concerns the military intelligence. Rossabi asserts that while Chen in his

⁸² As it was afore-mentioned, this is also a reason for why I argue that not only the *Xiyu fanguozhi*, but also the *Xiyu xingchengji* is worth being given a full translation.

⁸³ Since it took several months to get from the Chinese capital to the Timurid one, the Chen Cheng embassy was exposed to go through different seasons.

⁸⁴ Since there is nothing written about the length of stay in Herat, Rossabi reckons that if the return way took the same period of time as the way to Herat, then Chen Cheng must have stayed about two months in the Timurid capital.

accounts mainly addresses economic practices and unusual customs, he does not make comments on the military system of the Timurids, though the Ming court was very cautious with its defence capacity. Rossabi argues that it is hard to believe that the emperor did not order Chen to make a report on any military intelligence. Therefore, Rossabi reckons that there are only two possible answers to this puzzle. One is that Chen Cheng made only an oral report to the emperor, which was not written down. The other one is that he made a written report, but separately from the Xiyu fanguozhi, which may have been held in the Ming archives, but was not incorporated into the official chronicles.⁸⁵ In either case, Rossabi argues that there must have been a report from Chen Cheng on the military affairs of the Timurids.⁸⁶

Now finally, I would like to address Hecker's study about Chen Cheng, who wrote a short, still very informative paper about the circumstances of this Chinese diplomat's life, career, mission etc., as well as showing some light upon the particular political conditions in the Timurid-Ming relationship at the turning point of the fourteenth-fifteenth century. Although she does not devote much of her paper to discuss the politico-cultural and commercial aspects of this relationship - since she apparently does not seem to aim at achieving such a goal in her study, she mentions the importance of the legitimacy of power for the Yongle emperor through making good relationship with the Central Asian cities. Therefore, the Chinese-Central Asian embassies proved to be highly significant for him.

⁸⁵ Rossabi reckons that the reason for doing so may have been that the court did not want to make such military information public. These secret archives, however, might have gone lost due to a lack of making copies of them.

⁸⁶ After having accomplished the full translation of Chen Cheng's two accounts, I also noticed the striking lack of a description of the Timurid military affairs. Rossabi's study on the two Ming envoys - which I had not read before I accomplished the translations - strengthened my assumption that there must have been much more reports about military intelligence than it appears on the surface. If so, one could expect such a report from Fu An too, who was forced to stay for twenty years or so, twice in detain in Central Asia. The question here is if there had been such written reports, where have they gone? Or is it possible that all these reports were made orally, without written down? The fact is that if modern scholars could manage to obtain such reports on military intelligence, it could enlarge our knowledge on Chinese foreign policy, consequently, the relationship between the Timurids and the Ming Chinese too.

According to Hecker, these embassies were useful for Yongle not only for the legitimacy of his power, but also for obtaining military intelligence⁸⁷ directly from the Central Asian caravans, which the emperor himself frequently questioned about the conditions in the remote Western cities.

Hecker's standpoint shows light upon the fact that information-gathering through these embassies had not been only important for Timur a generation before, but also for the Yongle emperor at the peak time of a powerful Chinese expansion - albeit it was more energetic on the oceans in the south than on the northwestern innerlands. For Yongle, as it was pointed out in the former chapter, the Mongols were still meaning a sort of threat, which he could not ignore. The fear of another nomadic invasion must have made him become cautious even with Central Asia.⁸⁸ However, this fear never really led to a hostile policy towards Central Asia - rather on the contrary.

The significance of Hecker's paper lies in the fact that it succeeds in revealing much of the circumstances that were hiding behind the texts of Chen Cheng's accounts. These can be summarized in the following four groups.

First of all, just like Rossabi, Hecker shows light on the Confucian Chen Cheng's ethical code⁸⁹, which is actually well-hidden in the most part of his accounts, since Chen usually uses a rather monotonous tune in describing those visited places. Still, Chen Cheng's moral sense and personal opinions about what he had seen or heard can be caught at some places in the text. These personal opinions manifest themselves in negative forms, when Chen Cheng found something very improper according to his Confucian moral sense. Such kinds of disdainful opinions can be seen when he describes the way the inhabitants of Herat greet each other: a series of impolite behaviour between superior and inferior, or between men and women, or when seeing

⁸⁷ However, unlike Rossabi, Hecker does not address the problematic questions of the presumably missing reports on military affairs.

⁸⁸ Although, after Timur's unsuccessful attack on China, the Yongle emperor did not attempt to find an excuse and go westwards for a punitive campaign - as he did several times against the Mongols in the north, it may have become a kind of warning for him to keep always an eye on gathering military intelligence on the Central Asia conditions.

⁸⁹ Hecker discusses the Confucian sense of moral of Chen Cheng in more detail than Rossabi.

young boys wearing richly embroidered robes that should have been worn by nobles “properly”. All these were apparently getting Chen Cheng’s hackles up. These personal - albeit negative - opinions break the monotonous tune of the text, giving something particular to Chen Cheng’s account.

Secondly, Hecker identifies some of the buildings in Herat described by Chen Cheng, such as the Great Friday Mosque and the great citadel, but the bazaar in Chen Cheng’s description cannot be identified completely. Hecker guesses that it may refer to the King’s Bazaar south of the citadel. Moreover, Hecker also points to the fact that at the time Chen Cheng was a visitor of the city, Herat was just about to be born as the new Timurid capital, therefore, new constructions had not been built or completed yet. Consequently, Chen Cheng may have seen mainly pre-Timurid buildings that were made of unfired bricks. At this time, Samarqand was still much more abundant in splendid buildings than Herat.

Thirdly, Hecker draws attention to that Chen Cheng was very careful to take notes of various Persian words and expressions, such as greetings, titles, currency, names of the days, buildings etc., written in Chinese characters with quite a high phonetical accuracy. These words may have been considered by Chen Cheng useful for later envoys. Hecker suggests that behind Chen Cheng’s motivation for transcribing these phrases into Chinese there might have been the fact that the Yongle emperor intended to create a group of scholar-officials who can replace the foreigners working in the Siyiguan⁹⁰ and the Huitongguan⁹¹. However, the Yongle emperor’s wish for creating a purely Chinese staff in these bureaus could not come true. The officials were not working efficiently, since the level of their language knowledge was never good enough.

Finally, Chen Cheng’s accounts are of high significance in the sense that they reveal - indirectly - the co-existence of Mongol customs with Islamic ones among the local population, by referring to the practice of levirate. Certainly, Chen Cheng was not able to ascertain that what he had seen was the practice of levirate, since he only commented that many men took their own sisters as wives or concubines. However, although islamization was

⁹⁰ Meaning Translation Bureau, which was established in 1407. This bureau had several branches, among which the Huihui-guan was responsible for the correspondance with Central Asia.

⁹¹ Meaning Interpreters Institute.

already under process in the region, which was also promoted by Shah Rukh's belief in Islam and his refusal of the Mongol customs, the spread of Islam among the local population was a different issue. As Ralph Kauz points out, Mongol customs were still alive in the middle of the fifteenth century, therefore, one should not feel surprised at that Chen Cheng's accounts could explore some of these existing customs - albeit unconsciously.

Hecker's study helps the Chen Cheng accounts come to life in the sense that a vivid world opens up behind the monotonous overtone of the texts, by making a secondary analysis of its contents. This is what makes her paper so special in the research on Chen Cheng and his accounts, which I find very stimulative for further studies in this direction. This kind of analysis tends - intentionally or unintentionally - to take anthropological aspects. Certainly, the Chen Cheng accounts have limits in its contents that would make a completely anthropological research difficult. There is no wonder why Hecker focuses on the section of Herat in her study, since this part contains the most abundant information about what Chen Cheng saw, heard and thought, and therefore, this section of the text gives the easiest way to explore and identify important elements concerning the circumstances of Chen Cheng's description. However, I argue that this kind of analysis should not be limited to the section of Herat only. The latter half of the text about the other visited cities are also worth attempting to carry out a similar investigation - albeit they are short in length indeed, and appear to contain less interesting information, compared to the section of Herat.⁹²

Thus, I believe that an anthropological approach - or at least an attempt to it - is to be regarded as highly desirable in order to describe the world behind these texts, the significance of which I will discuss in the last chapter along with other studies, in order to point to further possible research lines.

Nonetheless, from the view-point of the theorisation-level, I argue that although Hecker's study is very inspirative for further studies in anthropological directions, Rossabi's afore-mentioned study on the two Ming envoys is on much higher level, since it⁹³ was written as a kind of critical

⁹² As for the question of whether Chen Cheng was the leader of the Chinese embassy in 1414, Hecker seems to say a yes, however, Kauz points to the fact that it could not be him, but the eunuch Li Da, since it is Li Da's name that stands in the first place in the Chinese records. Chen Cheng seems to be just one of the leaders of this embassy, not the main one.

⁹³ Along with other studies, addressed on later pages.

response to the assertions of the supporters of the tribute theory, which will be discussed in the third part of the present chapter.

2.2. From the initial studies to the appearance of the first theories related to the subject

In the second part of the present chapter, I will present and discuss the development of the research on the Timurid-Ming relationship in the Western literature, within the phramework of studies on the Sino-foreign relations.

2.2.1. Initial studies

The first interests towards studying the Timurid-Ming relationship did not start during the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, but surprisingly much earlier, towards the end of the eighteenth century. The first paper⁹⁴ addressing the matter was written by William Chambers, and published in 1787 in the journal of *Asiatick Miscellany*. As it is written in the introduction of the modern edition⁹⁵, although the *Asiatick Miscellany* looked small in its academic significance beside the journal of *Asiatick Researches*, which used to be the official journal of the Asiatick Society of Bengal, the *Asiatick Miscellany* should not be neglected at all. This statement is highly agreeable, since Chambers' paper on the correspondence between the Timurid and the Ming empire at the very beginning of the fifteenth century shows light upon a surprisingly early interest in the subject among the Western scholars.

Although it is not known for sure what exactly may have stimulated a so early academic interest during the latter half of the eighteenth century in the West, Chambers's following note is remarkable:

⁹⁴ Entitled *An Account of Embassies and Letters that Passed Between the Emperor of China and Sultan Shahrokh, Son of Amir Timur*.

⁹⁵ *The European Discovery of India*, in which the studies were selected, as well as the new introductions were written by Michael Franklin.

“The ensuing Extracts are made from a work which is not entirely unknown in Europe. M. D’Herbelot makes particular mention of it under the article *Schahrokh* and expresses a hope of seeing it one day translated by M. Galland; but no such translation has ever appeared.”⁹⁶

This note makes clear that the desire for the translation of the available accounts had been already uttered before Chambers took on the task in order to throw light on the Timurid-Ming relationship at a peculiar time. However, it is Chambers who completed the first study on the relations of the two empires.

Chambers made translations of some letters passed through between the Timurid ruler, Shahrukh and the Chinese emperor Yongle between the year of 1408 and 1419, embracing the period of a decade or so. These letters are to be considered as some of the most important ones passed between the two empires throughout the history of their contacts. These letters were extracted from the work entitled *Matla-i*⁹⁷ *Sadain wa Majma’i-Bahrain*, compiled by the Timurid court historian Abdur-Razzaq Samarqandi.⁹⁸ Chambers, however, did not only rely on the texts in Samarqandi’s work, but also checked these letters in the work entitled *Zafarname* by Ali Yazdi, commenting that the *Zafarname* includes all these letters too, except for the first one, in which the Yongle emperor speaks haughtily towards Shah Rukh, suggesting to him that he should get on good terms with his nephew Khalil Sultan. Chambers notes that Ali Yazdi may have omitted this letter on purpose from his work, since he was patronized by Shah Rukh, therefore, it would not have looked correct for him to keep this first letter together with the other ones.

Chambers in the preface of his paper first introduces the life of the author of the *Matla’i Sadain*, Samarqandi, as well as writes a brief explanation about the historical background - to be more precise, about the two rulers, Shahrukh and Yongle, with a somewhat longer explanation

⁹⁶ Chambers, 1787, p. 100.

⁹⁷ Chambers writes the word *Matla* erroneously as *Malta*.

⁹⁸ Although the second part of this work also includes the Naqqash account, it is not addressed by Chambers. It is a question whether he was not aware of the existence of this important account, which is eventually the most important source in the Islamic world about the early Ming China, or for some unknown reason, Chambers avoided to address it.

about the former one. Among others, Chambers mentions the fact that Shahrukh was threatened by Qara Yusuf⁹⁹, while Yongle “was dreaded on account of some cruelties with which he began his reign”¹⁰⁰. But Chambers’ remarks on the letters themselves are of much more significant. He first points out that these letters were written with strong genuine marks on them, both in their contents and their styles. As he comments, the letters sent from Shahrukh are written in a pure and proper diction, which is appropriate to an emperor admiring the Persian culture, while the letters sent from Yongle seemed to be so strange and awkward in their styles that Chambers assumes they must have been translated by some Moghul interpreter. Unfortunately, Chambers does not give concrete examples to make clear what exactly he means by “quaint and awkward”, just as the way he does not explain why he assumes that the Chinese letters were translated by a Moghul interpreter. Therefore, it is a question whether Chambers was aware of the fact that the Yongle emperor had established the Siyiguan in the year of 1407, and which institute had employed many Central Asians to teach foreign languages, and who were also in charge of making translations. As it was afore-mentioned, this institute, along with the Huitongguan responsible for interpretations, was never functioning smoothly since there was much room for the improvement of the language knowledge of the “staff”. Chambers does not even mention the existence of these Chinese bureaus, though. What he may have meant by a certain Moghul interpreter may refer to the difference of Moghulistan and the Timurid Empire¹⁰¹ in their cultural orientation, with the latter one being exposed to the cultural influence of Iran. Consequently, a Moghul translator may not have been able to make such sublime translations as someone from the Timurid Empire - as it could be assumed from Chambers’ note.

Chambers’ apparently trivial note on the “quaint and awkward” style of the Chinese letters, as well as his assumption of the possible existence of a Moghul interpreter, show light upon the fact that Chambers took enough care to draw attention to the stylistic differences of the letters sent from and

⁹⁹ The leader of the tribal confederacy of the Qara Qoyunlu that was later defeated by the Aq Qoyunlu.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 106. Apparently, Chambers was not aware of the legitimacy problem of Yongle’s power, which the emperor wished to solve partly by creating good relationship with Central Asia.

¹⁰¹ Especially at the time of Shahrukh.

those received by the Timurid court. He attempted to figure out the reasons for this by pointing to the Moghuls as a medium in the correspondence between the two empires.

In the rest of his paper, he makes no further comments, but presents the translations only. He starts with the extract written in the year of 1408, which mentions the Chinese embassy having come to condole with Shahrukh on his father's death. The next extract concerns the embassy coming from China in 1412, which was received solemnly by Shahrukh. This extract remarks the meeting of the Chinese envoys with Shahrukh as given the 'happiness' to the Chinese envoys to kiss his Majesty's hand. However, it is also this embassy that brought the letter of Yongle with an arrogant and haughty overtone, asserting that Sharukh's father Timur had been obedient to the Ming court, who did not omit to send presents to the Chinese. As it was afore-mentioned, Shahrukh's response was to send a reply letter¹⁰² to Yongle, in which he suggested to the Chinese emperor that he should convert to Islam. The connecting text of the two letters¹⁰³ in the *Matla-i Sadain* presents Shahrukh's reply to Yongle as "a letter of good advice"¹⁰⁴ that comes "from motives of friendship"¹⁰⁵, showing no sign of anger. However, in the Persian version of his letter, Shahrukh says that "the mutual friendship of fathers creates a relationship between their sons"¹⁰⁶, the meaning of which is very dubious. It could refer both to a more or less friendly relationship, thinking of the initial contacts of Timur and Hongwu, and to a hidden threat to Yongle, referring to Timur's planned attack on China. This latter interpretation seems to have a much higher possibility. The next embassy from China came in 1417 with a letter, in which Yongle was stressing the importance of making an agreement and union in keeping the roads open for a free intercourse between the two empires.¹⁰⁷ However,

¹⁰² Both in Arabic and Persian, with an obviously more Islamic religious overtone in the Arabic version.

¹⁰³ The letter sent by Yongle and that of Shahrukh as a reply to it.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 118. "Fathers" referring to Timur and the Hongwu emperor.

¹⁰⁷ In Chambers' translation, it is written as follows: "the subjects and merchants of both kingdoms might enjoy a free and unrestrained intercourse with each other", p. 119. However, this contradicts the reality of that no Chinese man or woman was allowed to leave Chinese borders without an official permission, especially not merchants, since the

the next embassy bringing a letter of Yongle, in which the Chinese emperor addresses Shahrukh on equal terms, is presented in the *Matla-i Sadain* with a special attention to its different way of writing, saying that each time that it comes to the name of the Timurid ruler, or a sovereign prince, or that of God in the letter, it begins with a new line. It certainly shows an obvious turn in the Chinese attitude to Shahrukh, from a haughty one into a highly cordial one.

Although Chambers seems to be contented with giving the first translation of these extracts, without going into a deeper description and analysis of their contents, his work and his comments are of high importance in the history of the research on the two empires.

After Chambers published his translations with commentaries at the end of the eighteenth century, it took a whole century until Bretschneider published his huge work on the Sino-Central Asian relationship on the base of (mainly) the *Mingshi*. Nonetheless, during these one hundred years, one can also find some studies related to the Sino-Central Asian relationship.

First of all, at about the same time with Chambers, J. Amiot made French translations about the accounts of the Siyiguan with some explanatory comments. He also gathered some of the letters that were passed from Central Asian cities to the Chinese court, though he did not do more than just collecting them.¹⁰⁸ Secondly, three decades or so after Chambers and Amiot, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, M. Abel-Remusat spent much efforts to make translations on Khotan from the Chinese dynastic histories, however, leaving them without any analysis. Thirdly, at the end of the nineteenth century, Imbault-Huart did a work on Hami similar to that of Abel-Remusat on Khotan: he made translations of the texts concerning Hami mainly from the Chinese dynastic histories. Although he made abundant commentaries about the contents of the texts,

government intended to keep the foreign relations under its own control. Presumably, the Yongle emperor was referring to his intention of strengthening the economical interests on bilateral terms. However, this letter was not the first one from Yongle to call for keeping the roads open for a free traffic between the two empires. Yongle's wish to do so was made clear in the letter sent in 1412 too.

¹⁰⁸ Bretschneider assumes that Amiot may have misconcluded that these letters were addressed to the emperor Kangxi in the early Qing times, and he did not regard them as important. (Bretschneider, 1888, p.149.)

he did not make an attempt to discover Chinese attitudes to the foreigners either. Actually, throughout the whole nineteenth century, no scholar in the West succeeded in doing more than collecting sources and making translations of some of them with a few commentaries at most. As it will be seen, even Bretschneider, whose works are well-known and have been cited frequently by scholars, refrained from the attempt to describe the relationship between the Chinese and the outer world, meaning Central Asia in this case. On the other hand, this kind of reserve from deeper analysis can be well understood if one takes into account that the records that were available for scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were hardly enough to promote the development of theoretical analysis about the Chinese-foreign relations.

Bretschneider's work entitled *Mediæval researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources*, was first published in 1888.¹⁰⁹

Bretschneider adds an introduction of twenty pages or so to Part Four, in which he tells about the classical Chinese sources he mostly used for his studies. Among these sources, the two mostly used ones are the *Mingshi* and the *Daming yitongzhi*. Bretschneider regards the *Mingshi*, the official historical work about the Ming dynasty as the main source, mentioning that at the end of this huge work there are twelve chapters dealing with foreign countries having intercourse with China during the Ming period. The other

¹⁰⁹ It is a revised and improved collection of three earlier works, arranged into two volumes: *Notes on Chinese Mediæval Travellers to the West* (1875), *Notices of the Mediæval Geography and History of Central and Western Asia* (1876), as well as *Chinese Intercourse with the Countries of Central and Western Asia during the Fifteenth Century* (1877). It is actually Part Four in the second volume which addresses the fourteenth-fifteenth century Sino-Central Asian relationship, and thereby, it also refers to the subject of the Timurids and the Ming Chinese. It is supposed to be identical with his work mentioned above (1876), however, there are some alterations in it due to the fact - as Bretschneider in the preface of the first volume writes - that during in the next ten years after publishing the three works above, there were significant new explorations in the subject which made these earlier editions need to be improved and adjusted to the current knowledge. This so-called boom was thanks to the Russian expansion into the region, which made scholars have access to sources that had not been available in previous times. However, since many of these new studies were written in Russian, Bretschneider had to use lots of Russian papers that had been published in the previous fifteen years on Central Asia.

main source to Bretschneider, the *Daming yitongzhi*, is the Great Geography of the Ming Empire, in which important geographical information can be found. Bretschneider used these two works as complementary to each other, saying that they were compiled from different sources. It is an interesting fact that Bretschneider does not mention the *Mingshilu* as a possible source for studying the Chinese-foreign relationship, which is regarded by scholars in the twentieth century as much more reliable than the *Mingshi*, since the latter one unfortunately contains several mistakes.

Bretschneider in this introduction gives a very brief historical background. Among others, he mentions the poems¹¹⁰ found in the *Yehubian* - allegedly written by Fu An, who was sent to Timur in 1395. Bretschneider also mentions Chen Cheng, though just very shortly. He enumerates the names of the cities that Chen Cheng went through, and asserts that Chen had provided information on the geographical conditions, local products and customs of those countries, as well as that Chen published these accounts in the work *Shixiyuji*¹¹¹, the Record of an Embassy to the countries in the West.¹¹²

Bretschneider did a huge job by translating and commenting the information of the *Mingshi*, the *Daming yitongzhi* etc. on the Central Asian cities and peoples, their locations and the local products, customs etc., and therefore, Bretschneider's academic achievements are highly significant. His translations, despite some mistakes, are rather accurate, but yet it seems to be better to read them with some caution.

There are two more facts that have to be mentioned about his work.

One is that he did not translate everything, but rather summarized them

¹¹⁰ The *Xiyu shenglangshi*, meaning poems written on the curious things seen on a travel to the West. Bretschneider assumes that these were written by Fu An himself, who was forced by Timur to travel throughout his empire.

¹¹¹ Another name of the work *Xiyu fanguozhi* (As for the "fate" of the Chen Cheng accounts, see Morris Rossabi's *Two Ming Envoys in Inner Asia* of 1976, p. 19.).

¹¹² Bretschneider could not consult Chen Cheng's accounts in their original lengths, which were found only in 1934 in Tianjin, therefore, it took a long time until Wolfgang Franke called the Chen Cheng accounts the most important Chinese sources on the fifteenth-century Central Asia. Bretschneider could have hardly come to this conclusion, although he might have been aware of their importance.

- or some parts completely left untranslated. There are two notes by him in which he refers to these omissions. One note is to be found in his work published in 1876, saying that “our knowledge of the tracts that come here into consideration, is still so defective, that, being apprehensive of misleading the reader, I generally abstain from venturing any conjectures”¹¹³. The other note is to be found in the *Mediaeval Researches* Vol. Two, in which, concerning the history of Turfan, he says that “not wishing to fatigue the reader with a literal translation of the whole article, I have omitted many details destitute of interest”¹¹⁴.

Another fact concerning his works is that he eventually does not make any attempt to put the information gained from those translations into some theoretical framework, not even trying to make a semi-theoretical summary of the relationship between Central Asia and China. As Rossabi asserts in his unpublished dissertation of 1970, it appears as if Bretschneider intended to draw attention to the importance of these classical Chinese texts, and to be content with leaving other scholars the task to write interpretative studies.

Nonetheless, despite these two facts above, Bretschneider became one of the early modern scholars who are most frequently quoted, and who made significant academic contribution to the research on Chinese-foreign relations.

The first Western scholar to make an attempt to describe the early Timurid-Ming diplomatic contacts directly was Edgar Blochet in the early twentieth century. Blochet in his work published in 1910 comes to the conclusion that both Timur and Shah Rukh must have been vassals of China, based on the following three arguments. Firstly, the fact that the *Mingshi* describes the first two rulers of the Timurid Empire as such. Secondly, Yongle’s early letter to Shah Rukh, in which the Yongle emperor addressed the Timurid ruler on unequal terms. Thirdly, the fact that Shah Rukh mentioned the “friendship” of his father (Timur) to the Ming China in his reply letter to Yongle. Blochet even assumes the existence of a secret letter sent from the Timurid ruler to Yongle in which he allegedly admits Chinese superiority.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 227.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 198.

¹¹⁵ Lucien Bouvat in his work *L’empire Mongol (2ème phase)* of 1927

Blochet's standpoint, however, was challenged in later times by other scholars, among whom it is Joseph F. Fletcher who gave a brief-still-convincing critique about it.¹¹⁶ Hereby, it is enough to note that after Blochet, the Timurid-Ming research in the West came to a sort of standstill for several decades until it was finally re-started in the late 1960s as a reaction to the tribute theory discussed below.

2.2.2. The appearance of the tribute theory

After Blochet drafted the first theory concerning the relationship of the two empires, it took a long time until the academic interest in the West turned to the Timurid-Ming research again. The trigger for this sudden interest in the late 1960s was a reaction to the so-called tribute theory. The tribute theory was actually not related to the fifteenth-century Sino-Central Asian relationship, yet it is the theoretical phramework of the tribute theory that promoted further studies on the fifteenth-century Sino-Central Asian relations - though not in a supportive sense, but rather as a critical response to the tribute theory.

The tribute theory - hallmarked by Fairbank, Teng and Tsiang - came into existence during the 1940s to describe the Sino-foreign relations in a general theoretical phramework. Fairbank and Teng chose the Qing tributary system as a kind of case study, in which they made a long description of the role of the tributary system in the Chinese foreign policy. However, the interesting thing here is that the general aspects of this system do not seem to be the conclusion of their case study on the Qing conditions, but on the contrary, the Qing conditions were interpreted on the

devotes only a few pages to the Timurid-Ming contacts (Bouvat, 1927, pp. 30-31, and pp. 84-87), in which he eventually repeats Blochet's standpoints saying that the Timurids were vassals of China. As he asserts, the Chinese "poursuivant l'ennemi chez lui, les Ming, entre 1370 et 1390, annexèrent à leur empire plusieurs possessions mongoles. Timour dut reconnaître leur suzeraineté : s'en affranchir fut le rêve de toute son existence, et il mourut au moment où il partait, à la tête d'une armée formidable, entreprendre la conquête de la China." (Ibid., p. 31.), and that "la mort avait empêché Timour de s'affranchir de la sujétion de la Chine ..." (Ibid., p. 84.).

¹¹⁶ See this critique below when discussing Fletcher's work.

basis of the allegedly stable, unchangeable and inflexible tributary system that had been under heavy Confucian influence since ancient times. Fairbank and Teng argue that the Chinese foreign policy in the Qing times - even in the nineteenth century when the conflicts with the Europeans were increasing - can be grasped through this unchanging traditional Chinese world order: the tributary system. For the purpose of their analysis, Fairbank and Teng outlined their standpoints in the following four points:

1. "the tributary system was a natural outgrowth of the cultural preeminence of the early Chinese"
2. "it came to be used by the rulers of China for political ends of self-defence"
3. "in practice it had a very fundamental and important commercial basis"
4. "it served as the medium for Chinese international relations and diplomacy"¹¹⁷

The first one refers to the supposed Chinese cultural supremacy over its "barbarian" neighbours. Consequently from a Chinese point of view to see, all the peoples outside China were inferior to it, which peoples could become nothing but vassals of the Middle Kingdom. As such, the foreign rulers were given seals, titles, as well as the Chinese calendar as symbols of this subordinate position with the Chinese. However, as vassals, they were also supposed to bring tribute to the Chinese ruler at regular times in order to express their loyalties. Therefore, foreigners were forced to communicate with China on Chinese terms: within the phramework of the tributary system with a subordinate position. According to Fairbank, this world concept had not vanished among the Qing scholar-officials by the nineteenth century either - on the contrary, it was very much alive.

The second one refers to an obvious military-defence function of the tributary system, reckoning that the Chinese did not need anything from their neighbours but just peace. Therefore, the tributary system was understood and used for "buying peace", the meaning of which can only be understood with the third point together.

The third point refers to the commercial interests, though not that of the

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 137.

Chinese, but the foreigners. The foreigners, especially nomadic peoples needed things that they could not produce by themselves due to their unsettled lifestyles, therefore, they attempted to obtain these goods from the Chinese through the tributary system. The tributary system was thereby bilateral. The foreign tribute embassies coming to China were always given gifts from the emperor in return, which gifts were very valuable for them. Therefore, there was a kind of commercial interests for the nomadic peoples to come and “trade” with China - albeit the word “trade” in this case was never used by the Chinese, since it was a disdainful deed according to the Confucian tradition. Tribute was a cloak for trade that had been a very common practice since ancient times.

The fourth point refers to the political aspect of this institution, since the Chinese rulers often used these embassies to express political goals during negotiating with the foreign envoys at the capital, or on the contrary, sending Chinese envoys abroad to spy on the enemies or to make new allies.

From the four points drafted by Fairbank and Teng, one can conclude that the first, the second and the fourth point refer to Chinese interests, while the third one refers to foreign ones.

As Fairbank asserts, these aspects above have to be understood within a single system, but with different meaning to the Chinese and to the foreigners. The moral value of the tribute system was significant for the Chinese, while the material value was important for the foreigners. The possible economic interests for the Chinese in the tribute system is not included in the theoretical basis of Fairbank and Teng, although there is a little allusion in their study for such a possible economical interest, saying that there is an “interesting possibility, which deserves exploration, of an imperial economic interest - for instance in the silk export trade”¹¹⁸. Nevertheless, Fairbank and Teng are of the opinion that such an economical interest for the Chinese could not be considered real: partly because of the traditional Chinese Confucian way of thinking which disdained trade, and partly because of the belief that China was basically self-sufficient, therefore, there was no need for the products of the “barbarians”.

As for the second point of the four theoretical standpoints above, namely the one referring to the political defence, Tsiang’s standpoint seemed to serve as a base. Tsiang argues that the Chinese had no interest in making

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 141.

connections with the foreigners other than making peace with them.¹¹⁹ Tsiang was against the assumption of that China might have had profited from the tribute system in economically, besides gaining peace with the foreigners from it.

Fairbank in a separate study published in 1942 asserts that the peak of tributary activities came during the time of the early Ming period, referring to the great marital expeditions of Zheng He, who went to the sea seven times between 1403 and 1433. Fairbank argues that Zheng He was not really exploring terra incognita, but was going along well-known commercial routes. Moreover, what Fairbank thinks to be a striking fact is that while tribute started to decline after the end of Zheng He's expeditions, trade was still continuing. The reason for this is that it was not the foreigners in Southeast Asia who came to China, but it was the Chinese merchants who started to go to them. These Chinese merchants replaced the previous Arab dominance in trading between China and Southeast Asia, and Fairbank assumes that these Chinese merchants were responsible for the decline of the tributary system in the south of China.¹²⁰ However, the appearance of the Europeans in later times for commercial interests reactivated the old-style tributary-system conception. As Fairbank asserts, the Europeans, just like other "barbarians" in previous times, were attempted to fit into the traditional Chinese institute of treating foreigners. According to Fairbank, the Qing government remained unprepared against this commercial invasion from the Western countries. The Chinese court was not even able to make a difference among the Europeans coming from various countries, naming them in a random way¹²¹. This is also a surprising fact, since as it is

¹¹⁹ As Tsiang asserts, "if relations there had to be, they must be of the suzerain-vassal type, acceptance of which meant to the Chinese acceptance of the Chinese ethic on the part of the barbarian"; as well as "it must not be assumed that the Chinese made a profit out of ... tribute". (Tsiang, 1936, pp. 3-4.)

¹²⁰ That is to say, since Chinese merchants started to sail between China and southeast Asia and become more and more dominant in trade activities, Southeast Asian people themselves did not need to come any more within the phramework of the tributary system.

¹²¹ For instance, the term Fo-lang-zhi meant the Franks originally, which term came into China through Arab transmission. When the Portuguese appeared in the south in the sixteenth century, they were called Fo-lang-zhi too, and the same term was also used for the Spanish after their arrival in

asserted in another work of Fairbank and Teng published in 1954, by the nineteenth century, there were people in China who were very familiar with personal characters of the foreigners through every-day contacts with them in Kanton. These people were Chinese linguists, merchants and compradores. However, the court in Peking did not make use of these people for getting accurate information about the foreigners.

The case study by Fairbank and Teng on the Qing dynasty's reactions to the growing European commercial "attacks" by recalling the tributary system suggests that there had been a stable and unchangable Chinese foreign policy throughout the Chinese history. According to Fairbank, this led to an isolationist policy, in which China intended to reduce its contacts with the foreigners as much as possible. The court attempted to monopolize the contacts with the foreigners through the tribute system, prohibiting them to enter Chinese soil without permission, while Chinese private citizens were also forbidden to leave Chinese borders without official approval. Even if foreigners were allowed to enter Chinese territory, they could not move freely, but they were escorted directly to the capital - although along the road these foreigners were taken care of by their Chinese companions by order of the court, covering all the expenses during their time on Chinese territory. Thus, the Chinese-foreign contacts were monopolized by the court during the centuries.

However, the question here is whether the case study by Fairbank and Teng on the Qing conditions justifies such a kind of generalization of the whole Chinese history. As it will be shown, this question is of high importance from the view-point of the Timurid-Ming relations during the fifteenth century. But before turning to the critiques against the tribute theory, I regard it as indispensable to address Serruys' works on the subject first. The reason for this is two-folded. Firstly, Serruys made long studies on the fifteenth-sixteenth century Sino-foreign (Sino-Mongolian) relations, thereby, his studies stand much closer to the Central Asian Timurid Empire¹²² in time and place than the case study of Fairbank and Teng.

the Philippines (Fairbank, 1942, p. 146.).

¹²² Serruys addresses the Timurid-Ming relationship very briefly. First of all, he casts doubt on the authenticity of the letter of 1394 from Timur to Hongwu, in which Timur allegedly praises the Chinese court like a vassal of China, saying that "we know from contemporary sources that Timur had nothing but contempt for the Chinese emperor" (Serruys, 1967, p. 25.).

Secondly, Serruys devoted a careful attention to the tribute system, within which he attempted to describe the relationship of the Chinese and the Mongols.

Serruys devoted two big works¹²³ on the tribute system, in which he addressed and attempted to interpret the conditions in the northern frontier zone of China. The two works are actually to be thought as one, since as Serruys says, he addresses two different aspects of the same thing: tribute and trade. The reason for why he separated these two aspects in order to discuss them in two different studies lies in the fact that Serruys found the matter so huge that it seemed to be better to address them separately. Nonetheless, the reader will find out soon that the two studies have lots of overlaps, having the same conclusion about the Sino-Mongol relations. This is because Serruys eventually has a clear theoretical phramework for the relationship of the two aspects (tribute and trade) although it is not really uttered so obviously, which makes the reader need to read his works several times to find out this theoretical background.

Briefly to say, Serruys seems to follow the tribute theory described above. But what makes his work peculiar, or at least different from that of Fairbank, is that he does not use the tribute theory as something for granted, but he attempts to sustain it by giving examples of debates among the Chinese officials on what policy to take in order to handle foreign issues. Serruys holds the position that tribute was mostly a kind of diplomatic means by which the Chinese court became able to control the Sino-Mongolian relations. According to him, the threatening presence of the Mongols in the northern frontier zone made the options for the Chinese very simple: tribute and trade, or raids¹²⁴. It means that the Chinese were

Serruys calls Blochet's conclusion into question too, who asserts that both Timur and Shah Rukh must have been vassals of China, and that the Ming Chinese court would not have hesitated to attack them if they had not sent tribute. Serruys reckons that firstly, the Chinese were not in a position to defeat the Mongols in the north - not to mention to carry out a successful military campaign against the remote Samarqand and Herat, secondly, neither Timur nor Shah Rukh found it humilitating to send tribute to the Chinese; "... Timur and Shah Rukh ... along with the Mongols saw in tribute relations with China mainly a profitable business" (Serruys, 1967, p. 26).

¹²³ Serruys made use of the Mingshilu mainly: the day-to-day records of - as he says - a plenty of isolated small facts.

¹²⁴ Serruys is of the opinion that in the case of the Sino-Mongol relations in

constantly facing the dilemma of either breaking the relations with the nomads categorically that finally would have made the Mongols come to the Chinese with a submissive attitude, or listening to their demands and attempting to satisfy their “greediness” for Chinese goods. In the former policy, there was always a risk that the Ming military at the border line was not strong enough to stop the Mongols to raid the border area, while the other policy made China lose its face against the “barbarians” by showing its weakness. Serruys presents this irresoluteness in the Chinese foreign policy - to be more precise, the turns of these two kinds of policies - from the latter half of the fifteenth century up to the end of the sixteenth century.¹²⁵

In an analysis of the debates among the Chinese officials on these two options, Serruys asserts that “it is not easy to assess accurately the results of the horse fairs for Sino-Mongol relations, ... and evaluate the overall situation and the effects of the restoration of tribute and trade upon both China and Mongolia”¹²⁶. He points to the fact that some officials understood very well that “border raids were the result of the lack of tribute and trade, and were no valid reason to refuse tribute”¹²⁷. Wang Chonggu, the governour-general of Xuanfu, Datong and Shanxi, emphasized the significance of the every-day commodities that the Mongols could buy at the border. He argued that if the Mongols could not receive the demanded goods, it would lead to raids at the borders, but if they could, it would become

the fifteenth-sixteenth century, the term ‘war’ does not seem to be proper, since the Mongols in the Ming times were not after re-occupying China, but just to get access to both luxurious and ordinary Chinese goods, which they could not produce by themselves due to their nomadic lifestyle. Serruys’ note is in accordance with the hesitation of Esen when he captured the Chinese emperor: Esen failed to make use of the turbulence at the Chinese court and attempt to occupy the capital (see Chapter One).

¹²⁵ Serruys asserts that for unknown reasons, the Mongols started sending less and less tribute missions shortly after 1450, and that by 1500, the relationship between the Chinese and the Mongols (except for the Three Commanderies and the Jurchen) was “reduced” to border raids. After 1530, the Southern Mongols attempted to renew the tribute relationship with the Chinese, but their attempts had been rejected by the Chinese court until 1570-1571 when finally the Mongols managed to reach an agreement and resume sending the previously broken tribute missions. (Serruys, 1967, p. 43.)

¹²⁶ Serruys, 1975, p. 186.

¹²⁷ Serruys, 1967, p. 37.

possible to keep a peaceful relationship with them. His memorial was listened by the emperor, and as a result, the tribute relations were re-established in 1570-1571. This can be considered as a countermeasure to the policy taken about twenty years before, when in the 1550s it became forbidden even to talk about the renewal of possible trade relations.

It can be seen from above that Wang's memorial did not refer to the economic aspects¹²⁸ of a renewal of the tribute relations with the Mongols, but clearly to the aspects of a possible defence policy, through which the Chinese can "buy peace". Wang calculated that the expense of the Chinese return presents to the Mongols for their tribute gifts would be cheaper than spending huge money on constantly reinforcing the military defence ability at the frontier zone. In this sense, Wang's proposal contained economic aspects too, but purely on behalf of the military defence policy, and not for possible economic profits from trading with the Mongols. Eventually, he could hardly have had another choice, since trading was such a disdainful term among the Confucian officials that the reestablishment of the tribute relations with the Mongols would not have become possible by referring to some potential economic gain from it. Nonetheless, Wang's proposal was accepted, and the tribute relations were reestablished from 1570-1571, which seemed to prove the correctness of Wang's standpoint. Border raids eventually stopped, and the frontier zone, despite some minor incidents, became free of serious military actions. It is another question that the Mongols got carried away with the Chinese goods and demanded more and more of them. At the same time, there were always Chinese officials criticizing this (defence) policy, saying that the nomads were not reliable partners. These officials were constantly making proposals to abandon the tribute relations and to enhance the military effectiveness in the area.

Nonetheless, Serruys does not only pay attention to the attitudes of these Chinese officials on the state-level, but also to the every-day life of the Chinese-Mongol relations. First of all, he gives examples of the conditions at the border, pointing out that "the prohibition to trade with the Mongols could never be enforced: all along the northern frontier, soldiers in forward positions and watchtowers dealt with the Mongols every day"¹²⁹. This was

¹²⁸ That is to say, the economic profits that the Chinese court could obtain from the tribute and trade relations with the Mongols.

¹²⁹ Serruys, 1975, p. 80.

basically due to the fact that the army at the borders was in so bad conditions that the soldiers in many cases decided to “buy off” the Mongols by trading with them, instead of facing their attacks. Moreover, the Chinese soldiers made use of the trade with the Mongols to obtain things that they could not have got through proper military channels. These illegal activities were taking place in spite of the fear of the court that a direct intercourse with the enemy could lead to leaking military defence secrets - which actually must have happened indeed. The constant warnings of the court against these illegal activities show light upon the fact that the court must have had nothing but little control over the border conditions. The same impotence goes for the conditions at the capital too, where the regulation against business transactions besides the designated places¹³⁰ remained ineffective, since there were reports again and again about secret transactions in the streets and private homes. Nevertheless, the Chinese court also made warnings about that trade at the designated places should be carried out at fair prices, and that no one was allowed to insult or provoke the Mongols. The same warnings were given to the soldiers at the border too. On the other hand, those nomads who managed to enter Chinese soil as tribute-bearers and were accompanied by Chinese officials and soldiers on the long way from the border to the capital, were trying to slow down the speed in order to be able to trade along the way to the capital and make more profits. This was the case on their return way too, while they also tried to prolong the time of their stays at the capital as well. As Serruys asserts, it is trade that was the most important for these nomads in their intercourse with China. Among these nomads, there were numerous false tribute-bearers, that is to say, they were pretending to come under the name of some nomadic ruler who was claimed to be the vassal of China, and in many cases they forged documents in order to enter Chinese territories and make profits from trading. Many of them, when reaching the Chinese border on their return way from the Chinese capital, joined a new “embassy” at the border immediately in order to enter China again. According to Serruys, these nomads, regardless of being rulers or just merchants, pretended to accept the superiority of China, but in reality they had only one purpose in their mind: trade. They needed Chinese goods so much that the tribute system alone could not satisfy their demands, therefore, trade both at the

¹³⁰ Referring to the Huitongguan mainly.

border and at the capital bore great significance for them.

The relation of trade and tribute in Serruys' interpretation can be summarized as the following. For the Mongols in the Ming times, tribute and trade were essential in an economic sense, while it was also an important tool in the defence policy of the Chinese court. The former one corresponds to the third point (political defence) in Fairbank's analysis, while the latter one to the second point (commercial aspects). However, while Serruys admits that the tribute system provided the Chinese court with diplomatic tools in negotiating with nomadic rulers, he does not mention the prestige of the Chinese court that was supposed to be spread among the various foreign peoples through the tribute system. Serruys may not have neglected this aspect of the tribute system, however, he focuses on the political defence first of all in describing the Sino-Mongol relations.

What becomes remarkable in Serruys' studies is that he does not discuss the question of potential economical interests of the Chinese court from the tribute-trade relations with the Mongols. He only notes that "the view that Chinese needed nothing is, of course, questionable, and as we shall see, at all times much was imported from Mongolia even during periods when no contact was officially allowed ... Mongolia too had something to offer: horses, cattle, meat, wool, hair, hides etc."¹³¹. This note of Serruys is of high importance, because it corresponds to the hesitating question of Fairbank and Teng, namely to investigate the question of the interesting possibility of an imperial economic interest. However, although Serruys addresses this problem, he actually leaves it without further analysis, or to be more precise, he reckons that such a kind of imperial interest may not have been of high importance. His explanation for this is too short, compared to the total length of his two studies on the tribute and trade relations. In rejecting to investigate the possibility of potential imperial economical interests, Serruys refers to Krader's study. He admits that there is a point in Krader's assertion of that the Chinese-foreign relations were not one-sided, but they referred to mutual exchanges to satisfy each other's needs. However, Serruys argues that the goods given by the Chinese as return presents to the Mongols could hardly meet the needs for ordinary goods such as "cotton, foodstuffs, iron kettles, agricultural tools, household implements"¹³², since

¹³¹ Serruys, 1975, p. 15.

¹³² Ibid., p. 16.

the return presents of the court for tribute goods were usually textiles and clothes: luxury items that were good for the tribal chieftains and nobles only. Ordinary goods came from the trades at the capital and at the border fairs. Therefore, Serruys concludes that if the tribute ceremonials had been nothing but a form of exchange of goods, there should have been a much larger scale of goods presented and exchanged at the meetings between the Chinese court and the foreign envoys at the capital.

The neglect to investigate potential imperial economical interests¹³³, however, oversimplifies the relations of the Chinese and the foreigners, which makes the latter¹³⁴ appear as greedy, and the former as defensive that intends to find ways to halt nomadic invasions. This oversimplification makes his studies fit the tribute theory hallmarked by Fairbank, Teng and Tsiang, which, however, did not remain unchallenged by other scholars. Nonetheless, the fact that Serruys attempted to describe the every-day life interactions between the Chinese and the Mongols makes his studies highly important. Instead of lingering over the highest level of the Chinese society, he gives a glimpse into the real conditions of the every-day life too. Serruys appears to recognize correctly that these Sino-foreign relations cannot be understood solely on the base of studying the relations of the Chinese court with the “barbarians”, unlike Fairbank etc., and he attempted to give a much wider description of these relations. He points to the fact that the Chinese court was not capable to keep these relations effectively under its control. It shows light upon that the ideal way of doing things - the imperial intentions - was inconsistent with the actual situation in the every-day life at lower social strata.

¹³³ Serruys draws attention to Yang Jisheng, a Chinese official, who was of the opinion that tribute was even worse than trade at the markets, because those trades at the fairs at least could produce some profits, while the tribute system was economically rather loss-making as a result, since the court always gave goods of higher value than goods they received from the foreigners (Serruys, 1967, p. 62.). This note seems to have escaped Serruys' attention when developing his standpoint in the Sino-Mongol relations. This is an unfortunate fact, because Yang's comment refers to the economical aspect of the relations.

¹³⁴ Including Timur and Shah Rukh too.

2.3. Critiques on the tribute theory - the significance of the Timurid-Ming research

As it was afore-mentioned, the tribute theory above, which attempts to describe the Sino-foreign relations as stable and unchangable throughout the Chinese history by oversimplifying these relations did not remain unchallenged by other scholars. The tribute theory became criticized both because of neglecting the potential economic imperial interests and because of overemphasizing the cultural aspects of the official Confucian world-view. This latter refers to the view of that the Chinese emperors would never address “barbarian” rulers on equal terms due to a severe Confucian world-conception. The proponents of the tribute theory, who viewed the cultural history of China along with other aspects as something hard to be changed, were of the opinion that the Chinese emperors communicated with the outer-world in the phramework of a ruler-vassal relationship, which would have excluded the possibility of addressing “barbarian” rulers as equal sovereigns. This view, however, was successfully challenged, and as it will be seen, the studies on the Timurid-Ming relationship become particularly significant in this debate.

It is Joseph F. Fletcher who eventually challenged the politico-cultural aspect of the tribute theory successfully when discussing the fifteenth-century Sino-Central Asian relations as the subject of his study - though he himself never asserted that he was disproving the tribute theory as such.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Fletcher had a very unique relationship with the tribute theory, which cannot be left unexplained. First of all, Fletcher published his study on the Ming and Qing conditions in the book *The Chinese World Order - traditional China's foreign relations* edited by Fairbank, one of the proponents of the tribute theory. This edition was devoted to investigate through various studies the question of how the Chinese world order (described in the tribute theory) as an ideal normative pattern influenced events in fact. Although the studies included in this edition mainly focus on the conditions in the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), Fletcher does not limit his study solely to the Qing times, but he also discusses the fifteenth-century Chinese-Central Asian contacts. Though his findings about the fifteenth-century Timurid-Ming contacts (that will be addressed below) actually challenge the tribute theory, Fairbank in the preface called *A Preliminary Framework* mentions Fletcher's findings very briefly, without going into deeper

Fletcher addresses the contents of the two letters of the Yongle emperor sent to Shah Rukh during the 1410s. One is the letter sent in 1412, while the other one is the letter passed to the Timurid ruler in 1418.¹³⁶ The strikingly different overtones of the two letters did not escape Fletcher's attention. The letter of 1412 conveys a strong message from Yongle to Shah Rukh, in which Yongle poses himself as superior to the Timurid ruler, and consequently treating him as a Chinese vassal. Yongle's haughty letter did not remain unanswered. Shah Rukh, as a "friend", suggested to him that the Yongle emperor should convert to Islam. This contradiction between the two rulers could have led to some serious consequences, however, neither of them seemed to be interested in military clashes. The contacts did not break, and embassies continued to be dispatched. Yongle's letter in 1418 to Shah Rukh, however, had a surprisingly different overtone, in which he was addressing the Timurid ruler as a sovereign on equal terms with the Chinese emperor. Fletcher points to the fact that it was not simply against the Confucian tradition which did not allow to treat foreign rulers as equal with China, but also the contrast of the two letters also referred to a sudden change in Yongle's attitude. Fletcher asserts that it gives "a rare glimpse of the discrepancy between myth and reality in traditional Chinese foreign relations"¹³⁷: the Yongle emperor eventually acted against the Confucian tradition when treating Shah Rukh, the ruler of a remote empire, as equal to him.

However, what is not precisely clear is why the Yongle emperor was acting like this. It becomes clear from these letters that Yongle intended to keep the roads between the two empires open and safe in order to promote commercial contacts, consequently, it must have been the commercial profits which motivated Yongle to act against the Confucian tradition. At least, this is what Fletcher apparently attempts to suggest.¹³⁸ Besides, Fletcher also

discussion about their significance. Apparently, Fletcher *himself* did not intend to challenge the tribute theory either - at least "officially". However, since Fletcher's findings go against the tribute theory obviously, therefore, I argue that his study must be regarded as a critique to the standpoint of Fairbank et al.

¹³⁶ Both letters were addressed on former pages in the present chapter discussing Chambers' study.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

¹³⁸ Nonetheless, the acting of the Yongle emperor against the Confucian

draws attention to the quick change in Yongle's attitude between the year of 1412 and 1418, which he regards as the sign for flexibility in Yongle's foreign policy. This kind of flexibility goes against the Confucian tradition again too.

However, the fact that the Yongle emperor did not treat the envoys from Central Asia in 1420 - the so-called Naqqash embassy - as the envoys of an equal ruler, shows light upon that Yongle intended - or at least needed - to maintain his "face" before the court, showing that he is the outmost superior ruler all-under-Heaven. This contradiction between the overtone of the letter sent to Shah Rukh in 1418, and the reception and treatment of Shah Rukh's envoys two years later throws light on some apparent inconsistency in Yongle's behaviour. Fletcher calls this a double standard: Yongle treats Shah Rukh from a distance as an equal ruler, but he rejects to do so within Chinese borders.

After Yongle's death, the relations between the two empires took a new shape. As Fletcher asserts, Chinese contacts with Central Asia were gradually becoming "just" tributary, catching up with the Confucian worldview of how to treat foreigners properly: the Central Asians came to China, bringing tribute and getting return presents, but almost no Chinese embassy was dispatched to Central Asia any longer. This led to a Chinese withdrawal from initiating contacts with the Timurids.

Fletcher comes to the conclusion that the initiative attitudes of Hongwu and Yongle with the foreigners is not to be viewed as something particular or isolated in the history of China, but as something that naturally appeared during the time when China was strong militarily and economically, and which disappeared as China started to weaken in the second half of the fifteenth century. Fletcher also stresses that this process was taking place "within the context of the same institutions and imperial claims"¹³⁹, and

tradition can be easily understood from the fact that the early Ming China had a strong influence of the Mongol way to rule. Confucian ideas were pushed into the background, while Hongwu and Yongle could enjoy much bigger power in decision-making than the Ming rulers at later times. (See Chapter 1.2.)

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 217. Nonetheless, Fletcher seems to neglect the fact that the early Ming China was different from later times due to its Mongol heritage, which gave more power to the emperor until 1435, and which caused a change in the power-relations in the court.

that “it does not reflect a change of doctrine or an abdication of the emperor’s world supremacy.”¹⁴⁰

Fletcher’s study on the flexibility of the Chinese emperor’s foreign policy in the early Ming times, along with other small examples from the Qing times, goes against the tribute theory, according to which such a kind of flexibility was not expectable from the emperor on the basis of ancient Confucian virtues. Fletcher’s standpoint reveals reality behind the ideal Confucian way of doing things, which makes his study similar to that of Serruys exploring reality of the Chinese soldiers’ every-day life in the frontier zone, as well as the Chinese and foreign merchants’ behaviour against imperial regulations at the capital etc. Serruys and Fletcher both made significant contributions to point out the fact that reality was a much more different matter from what the Chinese scholar-officials wrote about or, at least, hoped to be real. It is another issue that Serruys and Fletcher did so in a totally different way - not to mention the fact that Serruys appears to continue being one of the proponents of the tribute theory, while Fletcher apparently attempts to challenge it after all.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 217. Fletcher also gives examples of other Chinese emperors who were treating foreign rulers as equals, such as in the case of the Qianlong emperor in conceding the political equality of the Kokandian king, or in the case when Manchu envoys carried out ‘koutou’s in Moscow (1731) and in Saint Petersburg (1732), as well as in the case of the equal Russo-Manchu Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689. What Fletcher here may refer to as “no abdication from the emperor’s world supremacy” is that the Chinese rulers did not intend to treat foreign rulers as equal eventually. That they were doing so sometimes was rather just a pretence in order to obtain something that was supposed to please them. However, Fletcher stresses that these phenomena were not exceptions at all, but something that could be treated as an organic part of the Chinese emperors’ foreign policy.

¹⁴¹ There is another common standpoint between Serruys and Fletcher. Both of them disagree with Blochet in arguing that Timur and Shah Rukh would have been vassals of China. However, Fletcher seems to give more arguments against Blochet’s theory than Serruys - which may lie in the fact that Serruys’ study is not about the Timurid-Ming contacts themselves after all. Fletcher disproves Blochet’s standpoint in the following way. First of all, Fletcher argues that “Blochet’s basic error is his failure to see the Ming letters in their total context” (Fletcher, 1968, p. 354). For instance, Blochet does not seem to recognize the change of the tone of Yongle’s letters to Shah Rukh in later times in which he attempts to treat the Timurid ruler as equal. Secondly, the fact that Shah Rukh mentioned the “friendship” of his father

Moreover, Fletcher also touches upon the question of a potential imperial interest on commercial gains too, however, his standpoint about the subject remains a bit obscure rather than obvious. He asserts that “for Central Asia, China meant trade; for China, the basis of trade was tribute”¹⁴². However, he leaves the question open what commercial gains exactly China could obtain from the tribute system. He only points to the fact that these relations were rather complexed, mixing prestige, military intelligence and the profits of trade in them¹⁴³, and that the Chinese court was very much in need of Central Asian commodities, especially horses - at least in the early fifteenth century. Moreover, Fletcher also asserts that it was an open secret in the Chinese court, including the emperor himself, that these Central Asian missions were after nothing but trade, yet “the Chinese authorities were happy to be deceived”¹⁴⁴. It was not possible to reveal the real character of these tribute missions officially, since it would have led to a weakening of the imperial prestige. Trade was carried out by the foreigners, but it was kept under imperial control within the tribute system, making these foreign envoys pretend to accept the superiority of China.

Fletcher does not really discuss this commercial aspect in detail, since it does not appear to be the main goal of his study. Nonetheless, his note of “for China, the basis of trade was tribute” means a kind of deviation from the standpoint of the hard core tribute theory, by referring to Chinese commercial interests in their contacts with the foreigners, however unfortunately, it remains undiscussed in detail.¹⁴⁵

to the Hongwu emperor must have been a sort of hidden (ironic) threat to Yongle rather than a reference to some honest friendship between the founders of the two empires - as Blochet would suggest. Thirdly, Fletcher also calls Blochet’s assumption about the existence of a secret letter sent from Shah Rukh to the Yongle emperor into question in which the Timurid ruler would have allegedly acknowledged Chinese superiority. In sum, according to Fletcher, Blochet’s arguments are too weak to prove that the Timurid rulers would have considered themselves vassals of China.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 209.

¹⁴³ As well as “other motives, which are still very much open to speculation” (Ibid., p. 207.)

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 208.

¹⁴⁵ As for the third standpoint of Fairbank and Teng, Fletcher only refers to the assertion which says that it would be interesting to investigate some potential imperial economical interest in the trade with the “barbarians”. However, Fletcher does not really go into a deeper analysis. Fletcher devotes

As for the economic aspect of the relations, it is Morris Rossabi who made the most elaborate study. He devotes his whole dissertation to investigate this question, in which he first gives an outline of previous critiques on the neglect of potential imperial commercial profits. First of all, Rossabi refers to the study of Lo Jung-pang, who disagrees with the assumption of that tribute and trade were not profitable economically for the court. He challenges the assertion that China needed no foreign goods, and that China was economically self-sufficient. Lo makes a difference between the conditions in the early Ming China and those from the middle of the fifteenth century. He argues that in the early Ming times, when China was strong both militarily and economically, the currency it used as a return gift to the foreigners was mainly paper money rather than silver and gold. However, this situation changed from the second half of the fifteenth century, when China started to weaken: paying with silver or gold, while receiving goods of lower quality. Amiot draws attention to that some embassies asked for certain specific items of goods in return for their tribute gifts, which referred to a kind of trade, as well as that the Chinese court was eventually quite aware of the intentions of the foreigners. Moreover, Eberhard strongly disagrees with the view which makes the foreigners look rapacious and greedy for Chinese goods, asserting that the Chinese *themselves* were greedy for “barbarian” goods, herds and horses. He also draws the attention to the fact that the classical Chinese records used by modern scholars were written by scholar-officials disdaining commerce, which fact seems to have escaped the attention of the proponents of the tribute theory.¹⁴⁶

These critiques above appear to have inspired Rossabi to carry out a long analysis on Sino-Central Asian economic relations in the fifteenth century, which made his study become the first systematic investigation into the subject. I regard Rossabi’s dissertation in 1970 as a remarkable milestone

more notes on Tsiang’s standpoint, who excluded any kind of possible commercial gain of the Chinese court from the trade with the foreigners.

His early death at the age of fifty in 1984, unfortunately, deprived him of further success in the matter. He left several unfinished studies behind him, and one can only guess what other new findings he could have shown up concerning the subject of communications between separated peoples and regions if he had not died so early.

¹⁴⁶ Rossabi, 1970, pp. 34-37.

both in the research of the fifteenth-century Chinese-Central Asian contacts and in changing approaches in the studies on Sino-foreign relations.

Rossabi in his dissertation eventually continued to work on what Fletcher had started to do in his study two years earlier, though in a totally different aspect.¹⁴⁷ Hereby, I feel obliged to stress that I consider Rossabi the most fertile scholar who appears to have spent the most time on describing and revealing Sino-Inner Asian relationship from the Ming times, providing a new theoretical approach by challenging the tribute theory hallmarked by Fairbank and Teng successfully. Nonetheless, I am also of the opinion that among Rossabi's work it is his dissertation that may be considered to be his most important work, because it is his dissertation that appears to have marked the theoretical standpoint about the Sino-foreign contacts in his later studies.¹⁴⁸

Rossabi's whole dissertation is devoted to refute the standpoint of the tribute theory saying that the contacts with the "barbarians" had no commercial gains for China, and that these contacts were rather irksome. The tribute system was installed in order to "buy peace" only, leading to an isolationist policy from the Ming times. Rossabi decided to investigate this standpoint through a case study of the Chinese relations with Central Asia and Hami in the fifteenth century. The reason for why he addresses Hami with Central Asia together lies in two facts: firstly, Hami was the "funnel" of these Sino-Central Asian contacts, through which city every embassy and caravan had to go through, and secondly, Hami did not lie far away from the Ming borders, which the Ming court attempted to keep under strong control throughout the century. Hami was not just a city, through which envoys were coming and going, but it also provided the Chinese court with vital information on the political conditions in Central Asia.¹⁴⁹ Rossabi points out that the Chinese court had surprisingly accurate information on the Central

¹⁴⁷ From the acknowledgments in Rossabi's dissertation, it turns out that both Fletcher and Serruys were helping Rossabi with providing him with necessary sources.

¹⁴⁸ It is, however, interesting to see that Rossabi has never published his dissertation, the reason for which is quite unknown to me. I managed to obtain a copy of his dissertation through an official order at the library of the Kyoto University.

¹⁴⁹ Military intelligence was a vital issue in the Sino-foreign relations in the Ming times, as it was afore-mentioned.

Asian conditions, training Chinese experts on these regions, and that the Chinese *did* obtain useful and necessary items of goods from the foreigners. This challenges the “traditional” view of that the Chinese did not have commercial interests in their contacts with the foreigners. Rossabi points to the fact that even in the second half of the century, when the official Chinese standpoint changed to reduce these foreign contacts as much as possible,¹⁵⁰ Chinese merchants, eunuchs and local officials evaded the regulations and continued to go after trade with Central Asia.¹⁵¹

Rossabi outlines his findings in thirteen points to show the incorrectness of the tribute theory. These points will be presented below briefly¹⁵²:

1. The early Ming emperors initiated contacts with Hami and Central Asia, dispatched embassies¹⁵³ even to remote cities to stimulate them to come and bring tribute. Yongle was pursuing a trade for horses both on the northwestern and the northeastern borders, and the three more emperors after Yongle was following him to do so too, until the attack of Esen in 1449.¹⁵⁴
2. The Chinese did not use trade merely as a means of political control. It was very rare that the Chinese court decided to stop trading at the borders in order to control the nomads.¹⁵⁵
3. It is an incorrect view that the Chinese did not obtain useful goods. The tribute embassies brought horses, camels, animal pelts, jade, Mohammedan blue, sal ammoniac, knives etc., which were very

¹⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Rossabi acknowledges that the tribute theory successfully showed light upon the traditional and official Confucian view of Sino-foreign contacts.

¹⁵¹ Rossabi mainly follows a chronological order in his dissertation, but he devotes separate chapters to describe the tribute theory and its early critiques, the economic relations between China and Central Asia, as well as the characteristic features of the tea and horse trade between the Chinese and the nomads.

¹⁵² Rossabi, 1970, pp. 322-326.

¹⁵³ Especially Yongle.

¹⁵⁴ To say early Ming China, Rossabi appears to refer to the period until 1449, Esen’s attack, and not to 1435, as Dreyer does, whereafter the Mongol heritage of the early Ming times disappears sharply.

¹⁵⁵ At this point, Rossabi specifies T. C. Lin’s assertion saying that the economical dependence of the people at the border was a well-known fact in the Chinese court, which attempted to make an effective use of it.

valuable items to the court. As for animals as lions, leopards, elephants etc., which were not truly useful items, were brought only seldom and always with other essential goods together.

4. The tribute system itself *was* a kind of trade, in which the goods in exchange were agreeable to both parties.¹⁵⁶
5. It was possible for the Chinese court to maintain a favourable balance in trade with the foreigners during the early Ming times, when the economy was strong. The court had access to paper money, tea, as well as silk and satin fabrics cheaply, and it was not burdensome for the court to offer them as return presents to the tribute-bearers. This favourable balance in trade started to fade only in the second half of the century, when the Ming economy was already weakening.
6. “Monopolizing” the contacts with the foreigners¹⁵⁷ promoted the profit of the Chinese court. It is questionable that the Chinese would not have been after profit in the early Ming times.
7. The court disdained commerce in public, but in reality it seemed to be eager after certain items. The Chinese officials who were speaking against trading with the nomads from the second half of the century did so not because of some Confucian sense of moral, but because of warning against an unfavourable trade with the nomads.¹⁵⁸
8. The government was contemptuous of its own merchants, but it did not hesitate to make use of them if it was necessary: just like in the case when the government was not capable to transport tea to the horse fairs at the northwestern border, it asked for the help of the Chinese merchants. This is also a sign for that the Chinese court regarded trade as highly important, and they even gave some concession to its merchants for their help in return. Nonetheless, there

¹⁵⁶ At this point, Rossabi’s standpoint is to be regarded as a different conclusion from that of Serruys, who refuted Krader’s standpoint referring to a mutual exchange within the tribute system.

¹⁵⁷ That is to say, not permitting the Chinese merchants to trade with the foreigners freely.

¹⁵⁸ It is interesting to compare Rossabi’s standpoint with the Chinese official Yang Jisheng’s memorial addressed in Serruys’ study. Yang, in the sixteenth century, warned of that the tribute system itself was worse than the trade at the border fairs, since while the latter was at least profitable, the former was not. Yang’s assertion seems to have escaped Serruys’s attention when describing the attitudes of the Chinese officials in general.

are reports about illegal contacts between Chinese and foreign merchants too, which could not have been carried out without the involvement of governmental officials behind the scenes.¹⁵⁹

9. Various groups such as merchants, eunuchs and local officials were pursuing trade actively. They did not seem to be disdainful of it. Instead, they appeared to increase the commercial contacts with Central Asia. Therefore, it is not clear why they did not attempt to unite and change the traditional disdain of commerce.
10. Hami was of great importance both politically and economically. Besides military intelligence, it also provided the Chinese court with horses.
11. Yongle's treating Shah Rukh as an equal ruler raises the question of whether one can see other Ming ruler(s) behaving like Yongle.¹⁶⁰
12. In sum, economic motives played important role in the Chinese foreign policy, which challenges the view of an isolationist policy asserted by the tribute theory.
13. Finally, the Chinese court was well-informed about the political and economic conditions in Central Asia. Such information came from both the Chinese envoys and that of Hami, local officials and perhaps even Chinese merchants dealing with Central Asian peoples.

What becomes clear from Rossabi's outline above is that he does not criticize the tribute theory by re-investigating the conditions in the Qing times, but he refutes its generalization for the whole Chinese history by choosing the fifteenth-century Sino-Central Asian relations as a case study. Consequently, Rossabi reaches to a different stage of the Asian history to disprove the assertions of the tribute theory. Nonetheless, Rossabi admits that the tribute theory seems to be correct in showing the traditional Chinese view of the Sino-foreign contacts, but he argues that there was an obvious difference in the ideal way and the real conditions. As he says, "China's eagerness to trade with other nations, though simultaneously masked by contempt for this commerce, must be considered in any study of

¹⁵⁹ As I pointed to it in Serruys's study, these illegal contacts reveal the real conditions, in which the government was not capable to keep the foreign contacts under total control.

¹⁶⁰ This point obviously refers to Fletcher's study.

Chinese foreign affairs, particularly during the Ming¹⁶¹. Rossabi's assertion, however, also raises the question of whether the tribute theory could be challenged on the field it was born, that is by a re-investigation of the Qing conditions.¹⁶²

Rossabi in a separate paper focuses on the Ming China's relations with Hami exclusively, in which he re-asserts that the Ming policy toward Hami challenges the traditional view of that China intended to restrict its contacts with foreign states. He points out that China held Hami under strong control in the fifteenth century, which control started to weaken only towards the end of the century due to the worsening financial and military conditions of the Ming China. The Ming court attempted to use Hami as a buffer zone against foreign attacks, as well as to protect the trade routes to the West. Furthermore, the court was also eager to educate experts on

¹⁶¹ Rossabi, 1970, p. 326.

¹⁶² Rossabi's dissertation of 1970 was followed by an edition of eleven separate studies, each study written by a different author, which also aimed at revealing the inaccuracy of the tribute theory. This book was edited by Rossabi and published in 1983. This was a result of a conference held in 1978, the significance of which is that it was a kind of counterweight to the book edited by Fairbank and published in 1968 (*The Chinese world order : traditional China's foreign relations*). As it was afore-mentioned, the Fairbank volume contains papers focusing on the Sino-foreign relations in the Qing dynasty. Rossabi's edition challenges the views in the Fairbank volume, however, not by choosing the fifteenth-century conditions as a so-called counter-subject this time, but mainly the Song dynasty. The reason for choosing the Song times lies in the fact that the Rossabi edition intended to seek for a Chinese historical stage when China was not powerful enough to deal with its foreign neighbours from an unequal position. As the title - China among Equals - of the Rossabi volume shows, by the Southern Song period, China had become so weak that its position can be regarded as equal to its neighbours. For Rossabi, the word inequality seems to be a disturbing factor in approaching the Chinese foreign policy. This is because Rossabi seems to reckon that the behaviour pattern of a country in a situation when it is so powerful that no neighbouring country can really threaten its military or economic power must be different when these neighbouring threats are real indeed. Rossabi intended to edit a book of studies to address China's behaviour in a time when China was far not above its neighbours in power. The traditional Chinese tribute system referred to a normative ideology of inequality, which ideology however must have been challenged by actual practice when China was unable to address its neighbours from an outmost superior position.

Central Asian conditions such as Chen Cheng in the early Ming times, as well as Ma Wensheng and Xu Jin at the end of the century, trained specialists in various languages spoken in Hami at the Siyiguan and the Huitongguan. Rossabi's last note in this paper is of high importance, saying that "Ming policy toward Hami reveals a realism about the Other, which must, in part, derive from the *realpolitik* of the Mongol era" (Rossabi, 1997, p. 97.). This assertion shows light upon that the Mongol influence on the early Ming times did not completely fade away after 1435, not even after 1449, but it continued to be present up to the end of the fifteenth century.

What makes the studies of Fletcher and Rossabi particular is that both of them turn to the Sino-Central Asian relations in the fifteenth century for help, which historical stage appears to be highly remarkable and significant in the studies of the Sino-foreign contacts.

After Fletcher and Rossabi, there have only two more studies appeared on the Timurid-Ming relations in the last thirty years in the Western literature. One is the study of Charlotte von Verschuer in 1981, and the other one is a quite recent study by Ralph Kauz. Of the two studies, it is that of Kauz which devotes a whole book to the matter, and which is of the highest importance in the research on the Timurid-Ming relations, while Verschuer's paper appears to be a brief outline of the early Timurid-Ming contacts rather than being a systematic study of the subject.

Verschuer's paper is to be regarded as a kind of miscellaneous study with a very brief outline of the tributary and commercial aspects of the early Timurid-Ming period¹⁶³. In very short paragraphs, she addresses the characteristic features of the tributary system in general, as well as the peculiar characters of the early Ming China's relationship with Timur. She mentions the political significance of the tribute system from the view-point of military defence in order to buy peace from the "barbarians", while on the other hand, she also mentions the imperial interests in the commercial contacts with the foreigners. Although, Verschuer seems to be correct to refer to different aspects of the relations, she does not go into deeper analysis on how these aspects are related to each other after all. She seems

¹⁶³ Verschuer consulted the works of not only Western scholars, but also some Japanese and Chinese researchers. She makes a very short parallel of these scholars, with regard to Timur's presumable attitude to China. However, she only devotes two brief dipnotes to this parallel.

to be contented with showing that although the foreign rulers were treated within the tribute system as vassals of China, there were two exceptions over this general rule in the early Ming times: Japan, and Timur's empire.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, Verschuer gives a list of the embassies between Samarqand, Herat and Beshbaliq, as well as China from 1387 to 1420, and also makes translations from the Taizu shilu and the Mingshi¹⁶⁵ about these embassies.

Ralph Kauz gives a rather new approach to the research of the Timurid-Ming relationship. He devotes a whole book to the subject, saying that the two empires eventually had a great possibility to form a political unity in the early fifteenth century - albeit it did not work out in the end. Kauz intends to find out the reasons for why the close initial contacts between the two empires came to grief finally. His book basically follows a chronological order of the historical process of the two empires, with two supplementary chapters on Central Asians in Chinese service and immigrants from Samarqand to China. However, the basic questions he intends to find answers to are about who were the main actors in the decision-making, in what degree the foreign policies inside the two empires were united, as well as what factors determined the development of foreign policies.¹⁶⁶

Kauz's main question to address the possible formation of a strong political unity between the two empires¹⁶⁷ obviously does not refer to the time of the late fourteenth century - the time of Timur and Hongwu, but to the period between the death of Timur in 1405 and the death of Yongle in 1424. It is Shah Rukh on the Timurid side and the Yongle emperor on the Chinese one during whose overlapping times the two empires had a possibility to form a strong political alliance. Kauz argues that despite the slight clash caused by the letter of 1412 by Yongle and the reply letter by Shah Rukh to it, the contacts proved to be so fruitful and strong politically

¹⁶⁴ Verschuer reckons that the embassies sent from Central Asia to China at the end of the fourteenth century may be just false tribute embassies led by merchants.

¹⁶⁵ Verschuer also gives a translation of the Fu An biography in the Mingshi.

¹⁶⁶ Kauz uses the Mingshilu as the main source for his study.

¹⁶⁷ As he says, "zwischen der 'Mittelmacht' Timuridenreich und der 'Grossmacht' Ming-Reich" (Kauz, 2005, p. 1.)

and commercially¹⁶⁸ that it resulted in “eine fast schon modern zu nennende Form politischer Koexistenz und sogar Bündnispartnerschaft zwischen beiden ‘Staatsgebilden’”¹⁶⁹, even though - as Kauz asserts - they cannot be studied with modern political methods in the context of nation-states. The pragmatic flexibility of the two rulers¹⁷⁰ promoted the development of strong bilateral connections. Kauz argues that if the development of the initial strong contacts could keep going on in the form of a political alliance, it would have led to a concerted confrontation against the ambitious European states. However, the change in the internal affairs in the Ming China after Yongle’s death caused a turn-away from the initial expansive Chinese foreign policy, which promoted the decline of the Timurid-Ming China. As Kauz says, from the Chinese side there was only one political attempt to seek for alliance with the Timurids in the second half of the fifteenth century. It was in 1457 when the emperor, once captured by Esen in 1449, tried to reinforce China’s defence ability by making allies - though it was not successful in the end.

Kauz points to the complexity of the Timurid-Ming relations, by referring to its commercial, political, military, as well as cultural aspects. Kauz argues that these aspects were eventually always present, but one of them was always dominant in a certain period. Roughly to say, it is the political aspect that was dominant up to the middle of the fifteenth century, while it was the commercial one in the second half of the century. The cultural aspect was always just a secondary phenomenon accompanying the political and commercial ones.¹⁷¹ To take a closer look, however, Kauz points to the fact that in the time of the founders of the two empires, the legitimacy of power was an essential issue for both Timur and Hongwu, and that they have tried to find potential supporters in each other.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Kauz reckons that these political and commercial contacts were reciprocal (Ibid., p. 10.). It shows light upon that Kauz inclines to deny the standpoint of the tribute theory saying that the Chinese were never after commercial gains.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁷⁰ That is to say, the fact that both rulers were able to put aside ideologies - the Islamic one in the case of Shah Rukh, and the Confucian one in the case of Yongle - in order to realize realpolitik purposes.

¹⁷¹ This seems to be the reason for why Kauz refers to politics and commerce in the title of his book.

¹⁷² That is to say, Timur attempted to legitimize his power by making good

Furthermore, Kauz also reckons that the embassies from Timur to China were after political interests in finding out the internal conditions of China - spying, rather than after commercial gains. The Yongle emperor, however, was eventually after finding allies against the Mongols, therefore he intended to initiate contacts with the Timurids eagerly. Besides this political motivation, the commercial interest was another important factor.¹⁷³ Nonetheless, Shah Rukh, for whom the Mongols were only a theoretical enemy rather than a real one, appeared to lay more emphasis on the commercial aspect of the contacts with the Chinese, as well as presumably a cultural one too.¹⁷⁴ After Yongle's death, however, the political aspect of these Timurid-Ming relations faded away on the Chinese side, except for the unsuccessful Chinese embassy in 1457. The Chinese court took a rather defensive policy instead of following Yongle's active expansive foreign policy. The reason for this shift in policy was partly due to the huge economic extravagance during Yongle's time, and partly due to the Tumu incident in 1449.¹⁷⁵ This led to a rather one-sided relationship: Central Asian embassies coming to China with a disguised-still-obvious intention for trade. The Chinese envoys that had played a significant role as mediators in the first half of the fifteenth century disappeared in the second half of the century, and only the Central Asian merchants remained as mediators of

contacts with China, while Hongwu facing a similar problem tried to find supporters even in remote lands through the tributary system in order to reinforce his position. It led to a kind of partnership, at least in the beginning. It was certainly without a mutual recognition as equal, and it is also highly possible that neither of these rulers were aware of the legitimacy problem of the other ruler.

¹⁷³ However, it is not easy to decide which of the two aspects were more significant for Yongle after all.

¹⁷⁴ Here, Kauz may refer to that although Shah Rukh, just like Yongle, was flexible enough to put aside ideological dogmas for realpolitik gains, he was also a devoted Muslim after all, who may have intended to spread Islam not just to the east towards China, but also within Chinese borders. In order to do so, it seemed to be necessary to maintain a vivid relationship with China, which allowed him to send dervishes with the embassies from Central Asia. Nonetheless, it is not known how much influence this might have made on the spread of Islam.

¹⁷⁵ Nonetheless, as for the change in the Chinese foreign policy, one should not forget about the fact either that after 1435, there was a Confucian revival over the militaristic heritage of the early Ming times.

these contacts. The rulers in both empires could enjoy less and less power in decision-making, which phenomenon was much more obvious in the case of the Timurid Empire due to a high decentralization of power¹⁷⁶. This decentralization in the Timurid Empire was accelerated by the political events and disunity after Ulugh Beg's death. On the Chinese side¹⁷⁷, the emperors after Yongle could not enjoy the same power as Hongwu and Yongle in the political decision-making any longer.

Nonetheless, as for the reasons for the break in the development of the initial contacts, Kauz's comment at the end of his work is to be regarded as highly important. He asserts that the lack of an independent stratum of merchants contributed the discontinuity of the strong relations at earlier times. Here, Kauz must refer to the lack of independent merchants in China, since there was no such a kind of problem on the Timurid side. China kept its merchants under control strictly and successfully, even though there are reports about illicit contacts between Chinese and foreign merchants. Kauz's note-worthy comment throws light on the possibility of a presumably totally different development of the Sino-foreign relations, the outcome of which is still hard to outline.¹⁷⁸

Kauz's academic contribution to the research of the Timurid-Ming relationship is enormous. He carried out a book-length systematic analysis on the matter, focusing on the Timurid Empire in Central Asia. At this point, Rossabi's work is different from that of Kauz, since although Rossabi himself discusses the Timurid Empire too, his main focus is to disprove the tribute

¹⁷⁶ "Bei den Timuriden sind vor allem die Provinzgouverneure, Prinzen und Emire von Bedeutung, die teilweise eine von der 'Zentrale' in Herat fast unabhängigen Aussenhandel betrieben" (Ibid., p. 250.).

¹⁷⁷ Although it was the emperor and the court itself that made the final decision, "immerhin gab es für die Eunuchen und Beamten zahlreiche Mittel - Berichte, Eingaben und natürlich vertrauliche Beratungen -, um diesen Entscheidungsprozess zu beeinflussen" (Ibid., p. 251.).

¹⁷⁸ There are two other important notes in Kauz's work that have to be mentioned. One is that although neither the remaining Chinese texts nor the Timurid sources are sufficient in details, it can be assumed that both the Timurids and the Ming Chinese were well informed about each other's internal conditions (Ibid., p. 251-252.). The other one refers to the fact that although China chose a defensive policy in the second half of the fifteenth century, it still remained tolerant towards foreign envoys, some of whom were even accepted and employed in the Jinyiwei, the Imperial Bodyguard, where they could be put under close control (Ibid., p. 255.).

theory, choosing Central Asia and Hami as a case study.

2.4. Summary

The studies addressed in the present chapter can be divided into two parts: those dealing directly with the Timurid-Ming relations, and those addressing the Timurid-Ming subject indirectly.

The number of studies dealing directly with the Timurid-Ming contacts is very small.

In chronological order, the first one is Chambers' translations from the *Matla-i Sadain* with a brief explanation of the historical background. Although he does not draw up any theoretical standpoint, the fact that he translated those extracts into English made him become the first scholar contributing the research of the Timurids and the Ming China. It is not surprising to see him having made no attempt to give a theoretical explanation of the contacts at the end of the eighteenth century. It was not given at the end of the nineteenth century either - not even on the subject of the Sino-foreign relations in general.

The first Western scholar to describe the Timurid-Ming diplomatic contacts is Edgar Blochet in the early twentieth century, who argues that both Timur and Shah Rukh considered themselves vassals of China. Although Blochet's theory was challenged in later times, there was a long break in the Timurid-Ming research in the West for several decades after him.

In the 1960s, Fletcher addresses the subject again, and immediately draws attention to the significance of studying the Timurid-Ming relations in a wider context. Fletcher's study can be regarded as a case study in which he appears to refute the assertion of the tribute theory, by pointing out the flexibility of the Chinese emperors in realpolitik decisions. In other words, Fletcher uses a politico-cultural approach. From the view-point of the theorisation-level, his study reaches a certain level, however, unfortunately, he leaves it uncompleted: he does not attempt to use the findings here and put into a more elaborate theoretical phramework.

Rossabi's dissertation, however, challenges the tribute theory very successfully in a much more elaborate work than that of Fletcher, and gives

a revolutionary new theory to the Sino-foreign relations. In doing so, Rossabi mainly uses an economic-commercial approach.

Verschuer's work is a sort of miscellaneous study. It contains a very sketchy description of the Sino-foreign relations and a list of the embassies between 1387 and 1420, as well as some Chinese translations about these embassies. Although she intends to point out that during the early Ming times it is only Japan and Timur that could not be regarded as Chinese vassals, she does so by consulting previous studies very shortly, instead of making a careful analysis. Therefore, though the approach she addresses in her study is a politico-cultural one, the theorisation-level of her study remains low.

The study of Kauz addresses the Timurid-Ming relations from a politico-economical approach - with an obviously bigger emphasis on the political one. This may be because Kauz does not aim at challenging the tribute theory by Fairbank, Teng etc. Kauz appears to accept the fact that the economic aspects of the Timurid-Ming relations were reciprocal. He is more interested in pointing to the fact that the two empires eventually had a high possibility of forming some political unity, which finally did not work out mainly due to internal problems in both empires at later times.

As for the theorisation-level of these studies above, I argue that the studies of Rossabi and Kauz are to be considered the most elaborate ones. However, since Kauz's study has been published recently, his study has had no time to make a deep influence on the research of the Sino-Central Asian relations yet, unlike that of Rossabi in the last thirty years. I believe that it is just the matter of time in the case of Kauz too.

As for the studies of Chen Cheng and his travel accounts, it is that of Rossabi and Hecker that must be considered as really note-worthy. Rossabi's study on two Ming envoys is devoted to refute the tribute theory, therefore the theorisation-level goes beyond a simple description. Hecker does not go into a deep theoretical analysis, however, she gives a careful discussion on the Chen Cheng accounts which can be stimulative for further studies in an anthropological approach.

Finally, studies such as that of Bretschneider, Fairbank and Serruys, have academic contribution to the Timurid-Ming relations in different ways. Bretschneider made huge translations from Chinese official texts on Central Asian cities and customs, though he did not attempt to put his findings into

some theoretical context. Fairbank et al. created the tribute theory which theory proved to be the first theoretical phramework in which the Timurid-Ming relations were later addressed, and eventually challenged. Serruys, although he can be considered as a proponent of the tribute theory, put emphasis to the discrepancy between the ideal way of ruling and the reality in the every-day life in China. I argue that Serruys' works have an inclination to an anthropological approach, which makes his works similar to that of Hecker.

In sum, I argue that the studies of the Timurid-Ming relations in the Western literature, regardless of the small number of them, managed to reveal significant aspects of these relations. Moreover, these studies also throw light on that the subject of the relationship between the Timurid Empire and the Ming China is not useful for itself only, but it can be - and also must be - analysed and interpreted in a wider context of the Sino-Central Asian (Sino-foreign) relations both in time and space too.

Chapter Three

The Timurid-Ming research in the Japanese literature

In Chapter Three, I will address and discuss the studies on the Timurid-Ming relationships in the Japanese literature. This will be the first attempt to give a general analysis and summary of the subject.¹⁷⁹ I will do so in a similar way as it was done in the former chapter. I will address and analyse the theorisation-levels of the studies, as well as the approaches used in them, wherever it is possible, and make clear their significance and academic contributions to the Timurid-Ming research.

The following studies will be addressed in the present chapter which can be divided into the following three parts in a thematic point of view. Firstly, there are two studies which address the question of the Timurid-Ming relationships directly. Along with them, there is also one study which was originally devoted to Timur only, but since this study also touches upon the question of Timur's war plan against China, I consider necessary to address it too. Secondly, there are four studies dealing with the travel accounts of Chen Cheng on one hand (two) and that of Naqqash (two) on the other hand, as well as one study on the life of Fu An¹⁸⁰. Thirdly, there are also two papers that are considered to be significant in the research of the Timurid-Ming relationship, although they are not directly connected to the matter. These two papers address the relationship of the Timurid dynasty with the Chinggisid one, giving a glimpse into the academic standpoints concerning the Timurid-Chinggisid relationship in Japan.

Strictly to say, there are seven papers written by Japanese scholars on the Timurid-Ming relationship, and very surprisingly, the majority of these papers were completed before the Second World War. This shows an early Japanese scholarly interest in the Timurid-Ming research, which well

¹⁷⁹ No scholar has attempted to summarize and analyze these studies so far.

¹⁸⁰ Fu An was the representative of the first mission sent by the Chinese court to Timur in the year of 1395, which was detained by Timur.

precedes the beginning of a systematic Timurid-Ming research in the West. However, the same fact also shows light upon an early decline in the scholarly interest in Japan, well before this interest woke up in the West. As it will be shown below, this early Japanese academic interest and its decline is highly connected with the development of the Japanese academic research throughout the twentieth century. Therefore, it seems to be useful to touch upon the development of the research on the (Islamic) Central Asia in Japan briefly, before starting to address the studies mentioned above. Nonetheless, this brief detour to the development of the research on Central Asia will be followed by a short description of the Timurid research itself in Japan, pointing out its characteristic features. The studies above will be addressed after this.¹⁸¹

In accordance with this, the present chapter will be divided into the following five parts. The first part will be devoted to a general description of the academic background of the research on Central Asia in a broader meaning, as well as on the Timurid research in a narrower one. The studies on the Timurid-Ming relationship will be addressed in the second, third and fourth parts. The second part will address the studies dealing with the Timurid-Ming relationship directly. The third part will be divided into three

¹⁸¹ There is one more reason for why I feel necessary to give a short outline of this academic development. That is to say, although the scholars in Japan have accumulated a huge number of studies in different areas concerning Asia, including Central Asia too, they tended to write their papers dominantly in Japanese for some reason, making a very few translations into easy-to-read languages for foreign researchers. As Hattori Shiro writes about this problem as early as in the middle of the 1970s, “Inasmuch as Japanese scholars specialized in the subjects of Asia usually write only in Japanese, the written form of which is extremely difficult for foreigners to learn, the Oriental studies in Japan are almost unknown to the Western world” (Hattori, 1975, p. 187.). Although this situation started to change in a positive direction slowly after the 1980s, in a review of 2002, Mano Eiji, who is one of the most prominent representatives of the Japanese research on Central Asia, also asserts that “(Japanese) researchers must utilize the collected materials and attempt to write papers in an internationally acceptable language” (Mano, 2002, p. 43.). There seems to be various reasons for why Japanese scholars did not attempt to publish their scholarly achievements in foreign languages as much as it would seem to be necessary, which phenomenon itself also appears to be worth researching. Fortunately, in recent years, one can see a tendency to publish in foreign languages too.

subdivisions, discussing the studies on two envoys (Chen Cheng, Naqqash and Fu An). In the fourth part, the three studies on the Timurid-Chinggisid relationship will be addressed. Finally, the fifth part will summarize the Japanese scholarly achievements discussed in the present chapter.

3.1. A review of the research on Central Asia, as well as the Timurid dynasty in Japan

3.1.1. Central Asia

Takasaki Jikido's review¹⁸² on the Central Asian research in Japan gives a glimpse into the development of the Japanese academic interest in this subject. Takasaki gives a short outline of this development until the early twentieth century, by pointing to the fact that Japan had not been really interested in Central Asia before entering the nineteenth century, especially not before modernization set foot in Japan during the Meiji period in the second half of the century. According to Takasaki, the first signs for a general rise of interest in the region appeared after the first opium war in China, which rose a political concern among the Japanese leaders at those times. After modernization became the slogan in the second half of the century, Japanese scholars started to study the history, geography and culture of Central Asia with academic methods imported from the West. Miyake Yonekichi's research standpoint at the turning point of the nineteenth-twentieth century was that the origin of the Japanese culture must be searched for in Central Asia. I regard Miyake's research standpoint as the most remarkable motivation for an active research on Central Asia, albeit it was not a dominant standpoint at those times.

Enoki Kazuo divides the studies on Central Asia in the Meiji period into two categories. One refers to those that deal with the current situation, and the other one refers to historical studies. The former one can be divided into two sub-categories. In the first one, one can find studies based on using both classical Chinese works and Western studies. In the second one, there are

¹⁸² I managed to read the manuscript which is expected to be published in Hungarian in *Keletkutatás*.

surveys and studies made on the spot in Central Asia, just as that of Nishi Tokujiro, Fukushima Masayasu, Hino Tsuyoshi, Enomoto Takeaki, Otani Kozui. Enoki asserts that all of these expeditions were closely connected with observing the political situation in Asia in order to make effective countermeasures against the Russian and British expansion. Otani himself wished to find possible ways to build a new Asia under Japanese leadership, making the British become concerned about his journeys, suspecting that Otani was after military intelligence after all. Nonetheless, as it turns out of Enoki's review, the early historical studies on Central Asia came into existence not on political interest, but as a result of a scholarly pursuit. The above-mentioned Nishi Tokujiro can be mentioned as one of those scholars too, since he published an academic work entitled *Chu-Ajia Kiji* (A Description of Central Asia), along with Miyake Yonekichi with his unique academic standpoint of a possible Central Asian origin of the Japanese culture. Moreover, Enoki also points to the fact that the Japanese studies up to World War Two mainly made use of classical Chinese texts in order to investigate the Western Region (that is, the territories lying to the west of China), but this situation changed after the war when studies mainly focused on source materials written by Central Asian natives.¹⁸³

Nonetheless, along with an increasing interest among Japanese scholars for using Central Asian sources since the 1970s, Shinmen Yasushi in the early 1990s points out the following things that are to be regarded as necessary for improvement in the Central Asian research in Japan. First of all, he concludes that there are only a few studies on Central Asia using approaches different from the historical one. Fields such as cultural anthropology, literature, linguistics, religion etc. have not been really made use of, therefore, "the research outside of the field of history lags frightfully behind for a number of reasons"¹⁸⁴ Moreover, he draws attention to the fact

¹⁸³ Enoki's assertion about the dominance of studies on source materials, however, needs to be corrected in the sense that using source materials different from Chinese ones did not mean an abrupt change after the war, but a rather slow one. Moreover, the language knowledge boom of the scholars in Japan on Central Asian languages did not take place before the 1970-80s, which fact questions the preponderance of using Central Asian source materials instead of Chinese ones before the 1970s (See Mano, 2002, and Kubo, 2003).

¹⁸⁴ Shinmen, 1993, p. 58. According to Shinmen, studies to explore the

that creating a system for an international information exchange and mutual use of source materials among the scholars of various countries is still in its infancy, and he stresses the significance of making a common international database that could be used easily by scholars in order to deepen interpersonal relationships and make academic communication better.

Mano Eiji gives a more detailed outline and critique of the development of the Japanese Central Asian research. He asserts that the turning point of using original Central Asian documents rather than Chinese ones in the early 1970s can be connected with the student movement at the end of the 1960s. As a result of the student movement, there appeared a heavy criticism saying that “Inner Asian studies should focus on Inner Asian materials”¹⁸⁵. According to Mano, the dominant focus on historical contacts was a result of depending on Chinese sources in Inner Asian studies. However, the economic development in Japan since the 1960s, as well as the fact that it became possible to carry out researches using original materials found in Inner Asia helped bring about new direction in these studies. While the research conditions were improving, the international research network became gradually broader, and the number of young scholars started to increase. As a result, various periods and regions that had never been studied before started to be studied from the 1970s. However, there are still two points, as Mano asserts, which need to be paid attention to and improved.

One concerns the question of an academic over-specialization, that is to say, researchers usually focus on their own narrow research field, which fact makes an obstacle for comprehensive works on Central Asia. Mano argues that this tendency is even continuing, which is due to the fact that the number of source languages increased so much that scholars cannot afford to study sources of fields different from their own. Mano draws attention to the need of writing a comprehensive history by one scholar in a legitimate

socio-economic aspects of Central Asia are very scarce and not sufficient. Nevertheless, Shinmen, in a separate place of the same paper, also reports about studies that were done in the field of sociology, such as studies on the Central Asian society by Hori Sunao and Sanada Yasushi. They used the method of urban studies and network theory. These works can be regarded as different from the traditional historical approach.

¹⁸⁵ Mano, 2002, p. 37.

discipline in order to find out “what is coherent in Inner Asian history”¹⁸⁶ and the position of Inner Asia both in world history and at present times.¹⁸⁷ The second problem according to Mano is that the Japanese scholars have “over-gathered” materials from abroad, which means that there are lots of materials gathered but untouched yet. Therefore, it may seem useful to slow down the speed of gathering materials and take upon a diligent analysis of those to be found in Japan already.

Finally, Mano stresses the need to enhance the level of the Japanese research onto the international one, pointing out the fact that studies which are only known and recognized in Japan cannot be considered as significant any longer.¹⁸⁸

3.1.2. The Timurid research

As it was afore-mentioned, the Japanese research on Central Asia was dominated by using Chinese sources up to the 1970s. Therefore, the question here is when exactly the research on the Timurid Empire came into existence and how it was developing after that.

Mano asserts that Inner Asian studies in Japan for a long time were addressing periods and regions that could provide scholars with a plenty of Chinese sources about Inner Asian relations. Thereby, periods during which Chinese contacts with Inner Asia were relatively scarce, such as during the

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁸⁷ Nonetheless, Mano does not just point to the need of a comprehensive study on Inner Asia, but he himself also made an attempt to go in this direction, by showing light upon the north-south interrelationship between nomadic and settled peoples in the history of Central Asia. This is a kind of counter-standpoint to that of Mori Masao, who stressed the east-west relationship of the Central Asian peoples through the corridor of Central Asia. At the same time, Mano also asserts that the theory of the north-south interrelationship refers only to pre-modern times. Therefore, he suggests that a new comprehensive history should be undertaken.

¹⁸⁸ In accordance with this, in a review of the Japanese journal *Nairiku Ajia Gengo Kenkyu*, I draw attention to the fact that unfortunately Japanese scholars usually write in Japanese mainly, without giving translations into more easy-to-understand languages for non-Japanese readers. This fact slows down the academic communication in international context.

time of the Timurid Empire in the fifteenth century, were left out of attention. However, Mano's assertion seems to need some correction at least at two points. As it was pointed out in the first chapter, there was an intensive communication between China and the Timurid Empire in the early fifteenth century both politically and commercially, and the relationship did not cease to exist even in the second half of the century when China took an obvious defence policy and stopped sending embassies to the Timurids.¹⁸⁹ Secondly, although Chinese sources are not abundant, compared with those referring to other periods and areas, the contacts between the Chinese and Timurid dynasties were so unique that it rose the interest of Japanese scholarship as early as in the early twentieth century. As Kubo Kazuyuki points out, it is surprising to see that in spite of the preponderance of Chinese sources in the research of Central Asia, there were also exceptions such as Fukazawa Keikichi and Haneda Toru, who both searched for sources different from Chinese ones.¹⁹⁰ What becomes more surprising is that both of them wrote studies concerning the Timurid Empire too. As a result, although there was a dominance of the Chinese-materials indeed, there were also scholars attempting to find a way-out of this, and the Timurid research in Japan started as early as in the 1910s. On the other hand, Mano seems to be correct in saying that the Japanese research on periods such as the fifteenth century was very insufficient in the beginning, however, the significance of an early academic interest in Japan towards the Timurid dynasty must not be neglected at all.

Hans Robert Roemer and Ando Shiro gives an outline of the Japanese research of the Timurids in their German-written work in 1989, as well as provide an about two-page description of the contents of the studies listed. Their work is to be considered essential, since this is the first attempt to summarize the Japanese academic achievements in the Timurid research. They list thirty papers¹⁹¹ in the beginning of their work, although there are only fifteen of them actually introduced. They limit the introduction to such studies that deal with Timur and his descendants, as well as their activities

¹⁸⁹ With one single exception in the 1450s.

¹⁹⁰ Nonetheless, as Kubo asserts, Fukazawa and Haneda did not have access to Turkic and Persian original texts, so they had to use Western translations of them.

¹⁹¹ Published between 1910 and 1988.

in Central Asia and Asia Minor. Their purpose with this work was to give a general but restricted review of the Japanese studies in a well-defined dimension. They did not aim at giving a systematic analysis of these achievements after all. They argue that the need to give an outline of these Japanese studies lies with the fact that although the studies of Japanese scholars are often translated into foreign languages in other fields, this is not true in the case of the Timurid research. Therefore, Roemer and Ando undertook the task to fill in this gap. Roemer and Ando note that the specific feature of the Japanese research of Central Asia is in its east-west orientation, which fact is just the opposite to the west-east orientation of the Western research. This comment is to be considered remarkable indeed.

Nonetheless, however important Roemer and Ando's work is to be regarded as, there are two points that must be mentioned about their work. One is that the list in their work does not seem to be complete¹⁹², probably due to a strong reduction to a well-defined dimension as the purpose of their work.¹⁹³ Secondly, as it will be shown below, there have been published many new works in the field of the Timurid research since 1988, therefore, it is desirable to continue the work of Roemer and Ando in the subject.

Taking a look at the publishing date of the Japanese works on the Timurid Empire¹⁹⁴, one can see that nearly eight percent of those works were published before the end of World War Two, which figure went slowly up to about thirteen percent by the year 1970. Thereafter, this figure suddenly doubled in ten years (about twenty-seven percent) by 1980, and doubled again by 1990 (about fifty-five percent), and again until the year of

¹⁹² That is to say, it does not seem to list all the studies concerning the Timurid research in Japan.

¹⁹³ As for the study of the Timurid-Ming relationship, they mention the paper of 1912 by Haneda Toru, as well as that of Miyazaki Ichisada about the Naqqash embassy to China, however, they do not mention the study of Uemura Seiji about the relationship of the two empires, and that of Mitsui Takayuki, who made another study of the Naqqash embassy. They do not mention another paper of Haneda written in 1913 either, which is devoted to Timur himself, and which would seem to fit the selection criterion of Roemer and Ando for their work. Moreover, among the fifteen studies of the thirty in total that are eventually introduced, it appears to be the paper of Haneda in 1912 only that is not just listed, but also introduced, and which also touches upon the subject of the present dissertation.

¹⁹⁴ There are nearly ninety of them.

2001. Consequently, one can see a more and more intensive Timurid research since the 1970s, especially in the 1990s. This tendency fits the growing academic interest in using sources different from that of Chinese, described above. The boom of the Timurid research is reported in the afore-mentioned Shinmen's review too, saying that one can see "a growing popularity in the study of the Timurid"¹⁹⁵, while Kubo asserts that "the research on the Mongol and Timurid period has almost reached the international level"¹⁹⁶. As for the subject of these studies, one can see an interest in Timur's geneology, his military and diplomatic achievements, the emirs' activities in the Timurid Empire, the relationship of the Timurids and the Chinggisids, certain institutional aspects of the Timurid dynasty, the capital Herat etc.

3.2. Japanese studies on the Timurid-Ming relationship

Concluding from the afore-mentioned development of the Japanese research of the Timurid dynasty, it may not seem to be a surprising fact any more why there was an early interest in the Timurid-Ming relationship well before the obvious rise of interest could be observed in the West. The rise of this early interest and its early decline may lie in the east-west orientation of the development of the Japanese scholarship, contrary to the west-east orientation in the West. It is also remarkable that the second study in a chronological order of the Timurid research in Japan addresses the Timurid-Ming relationship by Haneda Toru.

Two years after Fukazaka published his study about Babur, the founder of the Moghul dynasty in India, Haneda devoted a paper to the question of the relationship between Timur and the Yongle emperor in 1912, and thereafter in 1913, he wrote another study devoted to the life of Timur himself, but in which study Haneda also touches upon the Timur-Yongle

¹⁹⁵ Shinmen, 1993, p. 43.

¹⁹⁶ Kubo, 2003, p. 139. Kubo also mentions that after World War Two, research on Islamic Central Asia was stagnating for more than a decade, which is well reflected in the Timurid research, since almost nothing was published in the matter during that time.

relationship. These two studies¹⁹⁷ show light upon that Haneda was very interested in this subject, and he was eager to draw the attention of the Japanese scholarship to both Timur's life and his relationship with China. It is also an interesting fact that he published his paper about the relationship between the two emperors somewhat earlier than that about Timur's life. The reason for why he became so interested in this subject may lie in that Timur's war plan against China seemed to move Haneda's phantasy, saying that "... if we give Timur a few more years to live, there may have happened an interesting big turmoil in the history of East Asia"¹⁹⁸. Nonetheless, Haneda was not interested in attempting to describe what may have happened if Timur had been able to fight with the Chinese, but he rather attempted to grasp the facts that led Timur to make a war plan against China. In doing so, Haneda touches upon the question of Timur's relationship with both the Chinggisid dynasty and Islam, Timur's personal character, as well as the embassy of Fu An sent by the Chinese emperor, Hongwu in 1395 etc.

The title of the study written in 1912 is *Timur and the Yongle Emperor: Timur's War Plan against China*. In the preface, Haneda makes clear that although this event is a well-known fact in world history, there had been no real study made in this matter before. As he says, although there were only two-three years overlapping the ruling times of Timur and the Yongle emperor, this brief time is to be viewed as one specific period.

Haneda starts his quest for historical facts leading to Timur's war plan from the year of 1387 when Timur first sent tribute to the Ming Chinese court, and since that time Timur sent several other tribute embassies to China until the time he detained the Fu An embassy. Haneda asserts that Timur's attitude to China was changing during the time he was sending tributes, which gives one the impression that Haneda judged the detain of the Fu An embassy as a result of the process of Timur's changing attitude rather than the reason for this change. Apparently, Haneda is not aware of

¹⁹⁷ Not to mention the fact that these studies were completed very close in time.

¹⁹⁸ Haneda, 1913, p. 189. Another reason for drawing attention to Timur's life is that as Haneda writes about it in the preface of the same study, Central Asia lies far away from Japan, and (therefore) to introduce Timur's life briefly to the Japanese scholarship does not appear to be an easy task.

the letter-exchange between the two rulers¹⁹⁹ that seems to be the trigger of his decision to detain the Fu An embassy and stop sending tribute to the Chinese court. For a lack of this important information, Haneda attempts to explain the changing attitude of Timur partly with his Islamic belief and partly with his relationship with the Chinggisid dynasty. According to Haneda, both of these must have pushed Timur to take a hostile attitude against China, and it was only the question of time when Timur waited for that opportunity. Haneda argues that Timur eventually intended to attack China as early as 1396, and he held a grand discussion about which country to attack first in the name of Islam: India or China - though, the result of this discussion cannot be known. According to Haneda, what can be known is that Timur as early as 1396 started to gather soldiers in his empire for a grand attack,²⁰⁰ which must have led to the detain of the Fu An embassy. According to Haneda, although the result of the grand discussion is not known, Timur's intention to attack China was hindered by Pir Muhammad, who asked for the help of his grandfather Timur, while fighting in northern India. Thereafter, Timur became busy in the western ends of Asia, since due to the fault of his son Miranshah, there was a rebellion in Iran, which country Timur intended to suppress himself. It was the time when Timur learned about the death of the Hongwu emperor too.

Haneda mentions the travel account of Clavijo, in which one can find another proof for Timur's hostile attitude to the Chinese, by ordering the Chinese envoys to take the lowest seat. According to Haneda, although Clavijo could not possibly understand much about the relationship of the two empires, his accounts can be regarded as reliable.

Haneda describes the careful way Timur prepared for his attack of China until he finally decided to march against China, while he also mentions that there is not much to know about the reaction of the Chinese court to Timur's attack. He asserts that the only thing one can know about the Chinese reaction is that the emperor ordered Song Sheng to get prepared for the attack. Unfortunately, even today, almost a century after Haneda's study, there is not much to be known about the Chinese reaction either, which would make one feel that the Chinese were not really aware of the danger

¹⁹⁹ The letter written allegedly by Timur to Hongwu, as well as Hongwu's respond to him, addressing Timur as a vassal of China.

²⁰⁰ Here, Haneda refers to Saraf ad-Din Ali Yazdi's *Zafarname*.

they were exposed to.

In sum, Haneda in this study talks mainly about Timur rather than Timur and Yongle together. This suggests that the subtitle about Timur's war plan is more stressed than the relationship between the two rulers. Nonetheless, there is not much to tell about the relationship itself between Timur and the Yongle emperor indeed.

The study published in 1913 is entitled *Timur the Great King*. This title appears to be misleading, since neither Timur was not a king, nor Haneda himself asserts that Timur was one. The reason for giving this title to his paper may lie in the fact that Haneda asserts that some historians call Timur a great king, although Haneda does not make clear who these historians are.²⁰¹ Another reason for this may be a kind of respect from Haneda to Timur whom he calls a hero²⁰². This rethorical expression may be responsible for the misleading title.²⁰³

This study is much easier to read than the former one in the sense that the study of 1913 contains well-distinguished parts (or chapters), while the study of 1912 lacks for any kind of subdivision. Haneda firstly makes a short preface about the choice of subject discussed above. In the second part, he introduces Timur's geneology based on the Tuzaki Timur-i, saying that Timur was a descendent of Chinggis Khan's minister, which became useful for Timur to legitimize his rule over Transoxania. In the third part, Haneda gives an outline of the historical background of Transoxania. In the fourth and fifth one, he describes the way Timur became the ruler of Transoxania by 1370. In the sixth one, Haneda writes briefly about Timur's achievements, such as the fact that Samarqand was blooming and famous under his rule, as well as Timur's name (meaning 'iron') and his titles. In the seventh part, Haneda writes about Timur's last war plan, against China. In the eighth and ninth part, he gives a description of Timur's personal character.²⁰⁴ In

²⁰¹ Haneda, 1913, p. 191.

²⁰² Just as he calls Yongle a hero too.

²⁰³ In fact, Haneda says that "Timur never called himself a king, or as it is called in Turkic and Mongolian, a khan" (Haneda, 1913, p. 187.).

²⁰⁴ Here Haneda draws attention to that Timur was not just a talented-albeit-cruel person, as well as a determined and steadfast ruler in his decisions, but also a sensitive man, who was able to express his pain over having lost his mother or his son Jahangir etc. Moreover, he was not just an ambitious conquerer, destroying several cities, but also a civilized ruler, who

the tenth and eleventh part, Haneda describes the relationship between Timur and Chinggis Khan, as well as Timur's religious belief. These two aspects are strongly related to each other. Finally, in the twelfth part, Haneda points to the significance of the Timurid dynasty in the history of the Turkic peoples.

As it can be seen above, Haneda attempted to give a rather general description of Timur in various aspects of his life. Among the subjects Haneda addresses in this study, strictly to say, it is the seventh, the tenth and the eleventh part that can be considered related to the subject of the present dissertation. Nonetheless, the seventh part about the war plan against China is more or less the same in its content as the study of 1912, stressing here again that Timur actually intended to attack China as early as 1397, but his plan was hindered by a series of troubles in other regions of his empire. Haneda also describes the cautious way Timur got prepared for his march against China. The tenth and eleventh part, however, explores something new about Haneda's evaluation of Timur's attitude to China through his contemplation about Timur's Islamic belief and his relationship with Chinggis Khan. Haneda makes clear that the Mongol traditions and the Islamic belief were coexisting in Timur's time, and raises the question of in what degree Timur was a Muslim after all. Haneda asserts that although Timur in the remaining source materials is described as a devout Muslim, it is not easy to make sure that he was really one. Haneda argues that Chinggis Khan must have stood as a model for Timur, wishing to restore the Mongol empire. In accordance with this, the Islamic belief may have been just a tool for Timur to move the people of his empire to launch a war against an infidel country like China.²⁰⁵ Haneda says that "... (here) I would like to pay attention to (the question of) how Timur was using Islam. In order to unify Islamic people, it goes without saying that it is necessary to

was able to *build* too. As Haneda asserts, Timur was so versatile, showing so many different aspects of his personality that it is rather difficult to characterize him with one word.

²⁰⁵ Haneda writes about that the Yasa was still in use in Timur's time, which may have hurted the feelings of many Muslims among the people. The process of islamization in Central Asia is still not known in its details even today. Nonetheless, Haneda apparently was not aware of the fact that this process was far from being over during Timur's time, but he seems to believe that the Central Asian people were already converted to Islam.

take an Islamic belief and use it as a protection of those people, which fact did not escape the attention of Timur either ... (He) Timur was using this religion (Islam) without any regret”²⁰⁶, as it can be seen in the case of Timur’s war plan against China. Behind this description, Haneda seems to suggest that Timur had a kind of opportunist character after all..

In sum, although Haneda does not seem to know about the letter-exchange between Timur and Hongwu in the middle of the 1390s, his two studies did not only make a good service to the Japanese scholarship, but they are to be regarded as significant internationally too, by addressing the Timurid-Ming contacts right after Blochet.

Twenty-six years after Haneda made his pioneer work and laid the foundation for further research in Japan, Murakami Masatsugu took upon the task to write a more general view of the relationship between the Timurids and the Ming Chinese court. Murakami’s article is more elaborate than that of Haneda, providing more information about the subject, however, just like Haneda’s paper, it attempts to reveal the aspects of this relationship rather than giving a firm conclusion about it.²⁰⁷ Yet, there are some remarkable places in his article which help the reader understand about Murakami’s standpoints about the Timurid-Ming relationship. Moreover, Murakami goes beyond the scope of the time-period addressed by Haneda in 1912, since he does not only write about the events between 1387 and 1405, but also about the time directly after the Ming empire was established in 1368, as well as throughout the fifteenth century²⁰⁸. Consequently, Murakami’s paper embraces a much longer time-period than that of Haneda.

Murakami divides his article into three parts. In the first one, he describes the period between 1368 and the year of Timur’s death. He first writes about the fact that the way to Central Asia was not easy to go for more than a decade due to the fights between the newly established Ming empire and the remnants of the Mongol Yuan army. According to Murakami, the Ming Chinese took an isolating policy, but due to the Confucian ideology, China also needed to send envoys at the same time to proclaim their

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 192.

²⁰⁷ As Murakami stresses in the preface of his article, this is not a study (with a strong conclusion), but rather a general overview of the subject.

²⁰⁸ Albeit, the time after Yongle’s death is described shortly.

legitimacy to rule over the world all-under-Heaven.²⁰⁹ Moreover, Murakami asserts that Timur was a devout Muslim, who established a Muslim empire, but for whom Chinggis Khan was a model too. He does not raise the question of Timur's possible opportunist attitude towards Islam, as Haneda did. Instead, he writes about Timur's wars in Inner Asia, then about the first embassy sent to China at the end of the 1380s. He mentions the alleged letter sent by Timur in the middle of the 1390s to the Chinese emperor, about which Murakami concludes that it could not be sent from Timur himself, judging it from his attitude to China later. By doing so, Murakami added one important information about the early Timurid-Ming relationship, which was missing in Haneda's work. Moreover, Murakami asserts that Timur may not have been interested in trading with China from the very beginning, but rather in getting prepared for an attack against it.

Nonetheless, Murakami makes a remarkable mistake about the relationship between Timur and Moghulistan. He asserts that Timur's fights against Moghulistan were so successful that the latter eventually had to take a subordinate position, becoming a kind of vassal of Timur. Murakami assumes that Kuan Che, who was sent to Beshbaliq and Samarqand by the Chinese, was detained by the ruler of Beshbaliq, which may have happened under Timur's order. Murakami concludes this from the fact that Fu An got detained by Timur in Samarqand too, and Murakami connected the two events by presuming a Moghul subordinate relationship to Timur.²¹⁰

In the second part of his article, Murakami mentions briefly both Chen Cheng's three successful missions to Central Asia, among which the first one was the most significant, and the embassy from Shah Rukh in 1419. Murakami describes the relationship after Timur's death in the following way: "... as for the relationship between the Timurid dynasty during the time of Shah Rukh, as well as the Ming China under Yongle's reign, there were lots of embassies sent to each other, and the relationship was

²⁰⁹ Murakami did not touch upon the possible aspects of a strong Mongolian heritage in the early Ming times. For him, the early Ming China seems to be an abrupt return to the Confucian values with a sharp reject of the former Mongol Yuan dynasty.

²¹⁰ There are two things that Murakami misunderstood here. One is that Timur did not succeed in making Moghulistan his vassal, and secondly, Kuan Che was not sent to Samarqand, but just to Beshbaliq.

developing smoothly due to the peaceful and friendly attitude of Shah Rukh and the empire-building policy of Yongle.”²¹¹ As for the period after Yongle’s death, the relationship with Central Asia was becoming more and more burdensome for the Chinese, although they still remained generous in their return gifts to the tribute brought from Central Asia. Murakami points to the fact that the tribute-gift relationship was not just a formality that had to be done due to the Confucian foreign policy of China, but it had commercial advantages too. These commercial advantages, however, were rather one-sided, that is to say, the tribute-gift contacts were profitable for the Timurids rather than for the Chinese. As Murakami says, “... it (the tribute-gift contact) was not on behalf of getting commercial gains for the Ming Chinese court, ..., but it was enough for the Chinese to keep the ‘barbarians’ under control by showing the prestige of their own country (China) with an arrogant attitude.”²¹²

In the final part of his study, Murakami asserts that the aspects of the Timurid-Ming relationship had a political dominance in the beginning, which, thereafter, was replaced more and more by commercial ones on behalf of the nomads, in which Central Asian merchants were playing a more and more significant role.

By touching upon the commercial and political aspects of the Timurid-Ming relationship, Murakami did more than Haneda, who was more interested in finding out the reason for Timur’s war plan against China than giving a general conclusion about the relationship of the two empires. Murakami’s standpoint seems to be similar to that of the so-called tribute theory later in the 1940s. Unfortunately, it is not possible to know whether Murakami was consulting Fairbank, Tsang, and others on the subject, since in his article there is no reference to the works of them. Yet, Murakami’s work is to be placed in the context of the tribute theory, and the remarkable point here is that while Fairbank chose the Qing dynasty as a case study for their theory, Murakami chose the subject of the Timurid-Ming relationship. Put in other words, Murakami’s article preceded the rise of interest towards this subject, well before Fletcher and Rossabi wrote their first critiques on the matter.

²¹¹ Murakami, 1937, p. 53.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 55.

3.3. The research of the Chinese and Timurid envoys in the Japanese literature

Besides the three studies above on the relationship of the Timurid and Chinese empires, Japanese scholars in the early twentieth century turned their attention to the travel accounts of Chen Cheng on the Chinese side, as well as to that of Naqqash on the Timurid side, and produced two papers about each. This interest in the two envoys' accounts seems to be embedded into the context of the research interest of Haneda and Murakami, which shows light upon a more general interest of the Japanese scholarship at those times. Moreover, well after World War Two, the study about Fu An in the early 1980s also points to the continuance of this interest, albeit the study about Fu An seems to be a kind of exception in the timing of its publishing.

3.3.1. Two studies about Chen Cheng

There are two studies addressing Chen Cheng and his travels. One was written by Kanda Kiichiro and published as early as 1927, and the other one was written by Mitsui Takayuki published in 1938.

Kanda attempts to give a general view of Chen Cheng's life and his travel account, while also pointing to some doubtful points in the Chinese sources, as well as in Bretschneider's work (*Mediæval Researches*). First of all, he asserts that the data about Chen Cheng's life in the sources do not provide a detailed picture of his life due to the lack of a separate Chen Cheng's biography. Yet, Kanda manages to gather information from the Chinese sources, mainly from the *Mingshi*. He makes clear that the *Ji'anfu zhi*²¹³ is wrong in saying that Chen Cheng had been appointed as an Assistant Administration Commissioner of Guangdong before he started his career in the Western Region in the service of the Chinese court. Kanda points out that Chen Cheng's promotion to this title took place right after his second mission to Central Asia. He also proves that the chapter of Tibet in the *Mingshi* is not correct in saying that Chen Cheng was sent there too.

²¹³ That is, the Report of Ji'an prefecture.

Kanda shows that the person who was sent to Tibet was a certain Deng Cheng, whose family name was incorrectly written by the compilers of the Mingshi in the eighteenth century as Chen, probably due to taking Deng Cheng for Chen Cheng. Kanda also says correctly that it was a kind of Chinese habit that the embassies from Central Asia was escorted back to their homelands by Chinese envoys, and that it was also the same in the case of Chen Cheng's embassy. That is to say, the purpose of the Chen Cheng mission to Central Asia in 1414 was nothing but accompanying the Timurid embassy back to Herat. Moreover, he also points out the fact that Chen Cheng was not the leader of that embassy, but he was holding a secondary position next to Li Da.

Kanda also pays attention to the places that the Chen Cheng embassy went through, raising the question whether the places listed in the Bukhara chapter in the Mingshi was complete. He argues that three more places must be added to the seventeen ones listed in the Bukhara chapter: Shiraz, Andegan and Kashgar. Kanda makes clear that Bretschneider in his work lists those places in the very same order as it is done in the Bukhara chapter, therefore, Kanda concludes that Bretschneider just copied that list from the Bukhara chapter to his book.²¹⁴ This conclusion may be correct. However, Kanda seems to be wrong in assuming that Bretschneider aimed at making an order of the visited places. There is no reference in Bretschneider's work for this. Bretschneider only lists these visited places, without making a precise order of them. Moreover, as for Shiraz, Kanda seems to be wrong again. Though Chen Cheng *did* go through a place called Shiraz indeed, but it is not the same Shiraz as Kanda thought, but the name of a small place close to Samarqand.²¹⁵

The fact that Kanda focused on the places that were visited by Chen Cheng is not that much surprising, since one should not forget about that the original account of Chen Cheng had not been found until 1934 in the library of a Mr. Li in Tianjin. Kanda was aware of the lack of this original account, saying that "until the original book is found, there is nothing to do but to consult the texts of the Yehubian²¹⁶ and the Shilu"²¹⁷. Moreover,

²¹⁴ Bretschneider, 1888, p. 147.

²¹⁵ See Mitsui below.

²¹⁶ This works contains different notes in both historical and political issues up to the late Wanli period in the Ming times.

Kanda argues that the Chinese scholars at the Qing times were not really aware of the significance of the Chen Cheng accounts, by referring to a judgement about the surviving texts in the Siku quanshu (the Imperial Catalogue).

Mitsui Takayuki in his study of 1938 addresses the same subject as Kanda, however, he focuses on the places visited by Chen Cheng, his route to Herat etc., rather than other aspects. Therefore, his work is more limited in its subject than that of Kanda. Nonetheless, there are at least three points in his study that makes resemblance, or one can say even identical, with that of Kanda. Firstly, Mitsui asserts that the purpose of the Chen Cheng embassy in 1414 was only to escort the Timurid tribute-bearers back to Herat, which was a usual habit at those times. Nonetheless, Mitsui notes that the purpose of this embassy was not to go and search for the whereabouts of the former Chinese emperor, Jianwen.²¹⁸ Secondly, Mitsui refers to the work of Bretschneider too, by raising the very same question about the order of the places Chen Cheng visited. Mitsui makes a similar misunderstanding about Bretschneider's intention, assuming that Bretschneider intended to list those places in the order Chen Cheng may have visited them.²¹⁹ Thirdly, like Kanda, Mitsui also notes that the Chinese scholars at the Qing times did not have a correct knowledge about the Chen Cheng mission, by referring to the Siku quanshu (the Imperial Catalogue). However, Mitsui refers to a different statement²²⁰ found in the Siku quanshu which misjudges the distance Chen Cheng could get away from the Chinese border.²²¹

²¹⁷ Kanda, 1927, p. 83.

²¹⁸ A similar assumption has emerged concerning the purpose of the Zheng He expedition too, saying that those naval expeditions were eventually after finding the Jianwen emperor after his defeat by the future Yongle emperor in the internal war (Fairbank, 1942). Such an assumption cannot be found in Kanda's work.

²¹⁹ As I stated above, this assumption does not seem to be correct.

²²⁰ Different from that cited by Kanda, which referred to the underestimating judgement of the Qing scholars about the contents of the Chen Cheng account.

²²¹ According to the statement found by Mitsui in the Siku quanshu, Chen Cheng did not get further from the Jiayuguan (the gate towards the Western Region) than one or two thousand (Chinese) miles. This distance is too short indeed.

Mitsui raises four questions about the sequence of the visited places in order to correct Bretschneider's alleged mistake. These questions refer to Yanze (Lop-nor), Yanghikend and Sairam, the way from Shahrukha to Samarqand, and the way after Samarqand. Mitsui also investigates the question of whether the Chen Cheng embassy took the northern or the southern road. He finally gives a list of the sequence of these places, which eventually reflects the way of the Chen Cheng embassy much more correctly. Mitsui points out that the embassy did go through Shiraz indeed, as it was suggested by Kanda, however, Mitsui also makes clear that Shiraz here is not identical with the city in Iran, but just a small village near Samarqand.²²² Moreover, he also points out correctly that the Chen Cheng embassy went through the Iron Gate, and by doing so, he deciphered two missing characters in the Chen Cheng accounts. However, it is an interesting fact that Mitsui apparently does not know about that Chen Cheng's original accounts had been found just about three years before his paper was published in 1937. Mitsui does not mention this great finding at all.

3.3.2. Two studies about the Naqqash account

The above-mentioned Mitsui Takayuki did not only deal with the Chen Cheng embassy, but also wrote a paper on the Naqqash account too. This paper was published one year before the afore-mentioned study. These two studies show light upon Mitsui's strong interest in the subject.

Mitsui entitles the paper of 1937 *About Shadi Khwaja's Embassy to the Ming Court* after the leader of this embassy. He starts his paper from the point when the Timurid embassy became close to Chinese borders and encountered Chinese officials.²²³ Mitsui's paper is to be considered important in two points. Firstly, he attempts to identify the meaning of certain Chinese words in the Naqqash account, secondly, he reveals his

²²² Mitsui makes this correction without referring to Kanda's mistake.

²²³ That is to say, he does not address the whole account, but just the part of it in which the embassy finally got into contact with the Chinese. Mitsui intended to describe the Timurid-Chinese relationship based on the Naqqash travel account in this study.

standpoint about the Timurid-Chinese relationship, which he did not do in the other study.

Among others, Mitsui questions Yule's translation of the word *Daji* in the Naqqash account as 'daren'²²⁴. Mitsui, although he does not exclude the possibility of such an interpretation, suggests that *Daji* might refer to the Chinese word 'tongshi'²²⁵ rather than 'daren'. Mitsui makes this conclusion from the contents of the job of the *Daji*'s described in the Naqqash account.²²⁶ As for the meaning of the word 'Dangchi', Mitsui gives two possible solutions. One is 'tongzhi'²²⁷, while the other one is 'qianshi'²²⁸. Moreover, Mitsui points out that Yule unfortunately made the location of the Persian word 'Karaul' refer to both the Jiayu Pass and the Yumen Pass at the same time by mistake.²²⁹ Finally, Mitsui asserts that Yule was wrong in identifying the word *Sejnin* with 'siren'²³⁰, assuming that this word must refer to 'sheren'²³¹.

Beyond the linguistic discussion above, Mitsui gives the following description of the Timurid-Chinese relationship at the beginning of his paper. First, he refers to the letter of 1412 from Yongle to Shah Rukh, in which Yongle expresses his wish to keep the roads open between the two countries on behalf of commercial interests.²³² As Mitsui writes, "it can be concluded that since gaining profits from the trade with China was an essential desire of the Central Asian countries, Yongle's 'free-tradism' gave them a splendid opportunity (to do so)"²³³. The phrase of 'free-tradism' is a little misleading. In its first reading, it seems to refer to Yongle's intension for mutual profits from the tribute-gift contacts with Central Asia. However, this is not what Mitsui means by 'free-tradism' here. Although Mitsui does

²²⁴ Meaning 'great man' in Chinese, which used to be a greeting form to noble persons in ancient China.

²²⁵ Meaning interpreter clerk (Hucker).

²²⁶ As for *Li-daji*, Mitsui assumes that it may refer to the Chinese high official *Li Da*, but in the case of *Dah-daji* and *Jan-daji*, Mitsui was not able to get a clue to whom these two might refer to.

²²⁷ Meaning associate administrator (Hucker).

²²⁸ Meaning senior assistant or secretary to a board (Mathews').

²²⁹ It refers to the Jiayu Pass correctly.

²³⁰ Meaning 'temple-man' in Chinese.

²³¹ Meaning Houseman (Hucker).

²³² Mitsui uses Chambers' English translation of this letter here.

²³³ Mitsui, 1937, p. 33.

not explain exactly what he means by this phrase, it can be concluded that 'free-tradism' refers to a one-sided relationship: commercial benefits for the Central Asians, but nothing for the Chinese. As Mitsui asserts, "the harmful (aspects) of the Western traffic was (two-folded): one was the (danger of) leaking secrets of information on defence, (while) the other one was the excessive economic burdon of the Ming (Chinese) people"²³⁴. Mitsui stresses that the Chinese were aware of these harmful aspects. It is a pity that Mitsui does not pay more attention to this 'free-tradism' based on the letter of 1412, and does not attempt to give a new interpretation to the Timurid-Chinese contacts. Apparently, he is contented with placing this 'free-tradism' into the context of Confucianism, assuming that Yongle just intended to use 'free trade' as a tool to keep the Central Asian nomads off some attack of China. By doing so, Mitsui shares a similar standpoint with the afore-mentioned Murakami Masatsugu, whose article about the Timurid-Chinese relationship was published the same year as that of Mitsui.

Moreover, Mitsui asserts that the Naqqash account is an important source on the relationship of the two empires, however unfortunately, he fails to tell us exactly what can be learned from the Naqqash account. Nonetheless, he points to the fact that a lot of Central Asian merchants pretended to be envoys sent by Central Asian rulers in order to enter Chinese territories for commercial profits, as well as that there were numerous Central Asian people in Chinese service, whose diplomatic role must not be underestimated in the early Ming times.

A decade later, Miyazaki Ichisada addressed the Naqqash account again. Although he does not reveal his standpoint of the Timurid-Chinese relationship in general, he points out some new aspects of the relationship that had not been discussed before. First, he makes clear that although Hongwu and Yongle had several features common such as being cruel in ruling, the two rulers differed in their foreign policies. While Hongwu followed an isolationist policy basically, Yongle gave up his father's policy and opened the gates of China to the outer world. Miyazaki argues that by doing so, Yongle did not just turn away from his father's standpoint, but he eventually returned to the ruling policy of the former Yuan dynasty. He points to the fact that both Timur and Yongle were inheritors of the Mongol

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 34.

empire, and it was just a question of time when the two rulers would turn against each other. Nonetheless, Miyazaki does not intend to re-discuss the expectable conflicts between Timur and Yongle, since - as he explains it - Haneda already examined this issue in his paper in 1912.²³⁵ Therefore, Miyazaki intends to make clear the period *after* Timur's death. Miyazaki points to the fact that while the Central Asian nomads were eager to obtain the desired Chinese goods, Yongle sent envoys to Central Asia in order to get information about that region, and by doing so, the Chinese court managed to become familiar with the conditions in Central Asia.

Miyazaki uses the Naqqash account as an indispensable source of the Timurid-Chinese relationship, in which he draws attention to the fact that although the Naqqash embassy was treated well by the Chinese, the contradictions between the two empires came to the surface in the question of how to greet the Chinese emperor. Miyazaki points to the problematic 'koutou'²³⁶ here, the practice of which was refused by the Naqqash embassy. They did not carry out the complete 'koutou', that is, they did not touch the floor with their foreheads. As Miyazaki writes, "Yongle seeing the embassy of Shah Rukh not to carry out a full 'koutou' was not rustic to blame them for this"²³⁷. However, when Yongle happened to fall from the horse that was brought to him as a gift from Shah Rukh, he ordered to punish the Naqqash embassy. Miyazaki assumes that the real reason for Yongle's anger and intention to punish the embassy was related to the lack of the full 'koutou' after all.²³⁸

²³⁵ Nonetheless, Miyazaki makes two short comments about Timur. Firstly, Timur built a bridge over the Oxus in order to prevent the craftsmen taken from other regions to escape. Secondly, although Samarqand was flourishing under Timur, he did not prefer living inside the city itself, but in a tent outside of it, which habit shows light upon his nomadic personal character after all.

²³⁶ The meaning of the 'koutou' is explained in Chapter One.

²³⁷ Miyazaki, 1947, p. 46.

²³⁸ The embassy finally managed to escape the punishment by saying that the horse used to belong to Timur himself. Mitsui and Miyazaki both point to this event, saying that it is impossible that that horse belonged to Timur because of the long years having passed since Timur's death. Miyazaki, however, assumes that to say that the horse used to belong to Timur himself must have sounded as an acceptable excuse for Yongle.

Furthermore, Miyazaki draws attention to the long time²³⁹ that the Naqqash embassy spent in Peking. He finds strange why the embassy did not return to Central Asia for such a long time, which cannot be explained by saying that they were waiting for the end of the winter, since winter did not last for such a long time. Miyazaki assumes that the reason for this was either gathering information about the conditions of China, or personal desire for commercial profits from trading with local Chinese merchants. The Naqqash embassy did not spend more time than necessary in Peking alone, but also two months in Ganzhou and one month in Suzhou. Miyazaki points to the fact that the Chinese were financially in charge of treating the foreign embassies well, who therefore did not have any economic burden during their staying in China.²⁴⁰

3.3.3. The missions of Fu An to Central Asia

In the 1970s, Enoki Kazuo continued the pre-war trend above, by addressing Fu An's life and his missions to Central Asia, making clear some important points about him. Although Enoki does not reveal his standpoint about the Timurid-Ming relationship, he mentions briefly in the preface of his study that in the early Ming China, "several embassies were sent to Central Asia to establish friendly relations with, as well as to investigate the movements of countries in this part of the world, which had long been independent from the Yuan"²⁴¹. The first of these missions was that of Zongle to Tibet and Nepal, the second one was that of Kuan Che to Beshbaliq²⁴², and the third one was that of Fu An²⁴³ to Samarqand.²⁴⁴

²³⁹ Five months.

²⁴⁰ Miyazaki's standpoint precedes that of Henry Serruys by twenty years, who also describes the staying of these foreign embassies in a similar way.

²⁴¹ Enoki, 1977, p. 219.

²⁴² Enoki argues that Kuan Che was not sent to Samarqand originally, but just to Beshbaliq in 1391, where he was detained by the local ruler. By doing so, Enoki corrects the Guangxu Xiangfuxian zhi, which work asserts that Fu An was actually sent to Samarqand in replace of Kuan Che who was stopped in Beshbaliq and therefore could not fulfill his alleged mission to the Timurid capital.

²⁴³ Enoki questions Rossabi's assumption of that Fu An would have served as an interpreter.

Enoki asserts that as for the Kuan Che embassy, Bretschneider translated the texts in the Mingshi with commentaries, to which there is almost nothing to be added. Enoki, who had previously written an article about Zongle, turned his attention to Fu An, arguing that there are three points that need to be corrected in Bretschneider's two-page-or-so description in the work *Mediaeval Researches*²⁴⁵. Firstly, Enoki makes clear that the source of the text Bretschneider made use of could not be Book Nine, but the Supplement, Book Four of the Yehubian. This inconsistency may be due to the fact that the edition which Bretschneider refers to is actually not known. Secondly, Bretschneider seems to be careless in referring to Fu An as An or An Zhidao, since the correct name is either Fu An or Fu Zhidao²⁴⁶, while a mixture of An and Zhidao as An Zhidao cannot be correct at all.²⁴⁷ Thirdly, Enoki corrects Bretschneider's statement about the authorship of the Xiyou shenglanishi. Bretschneider asserts that it was written by Fu An, however, Enoki points out that it is just a collection of poems written by Fu An's friends.²⁴⁸

As for the missions of Fu An, Enoki makes clear the following points. Firstly, during the reign of Hongwu, the emperor was looking for people who were willing to undertake missions to foreign countries, and Fu An was among those applicants who were eventually accepted. Secondly, Enoki argues that Fu An had six missions to Central Asia in total, among which the first one turned out to be a thirteen-year-long absence from China due to Timur's detain of the Fu An embassy²⁴⁹. The other five missions were of

²⁴⁴ Enoki assumes that it may have been the embassy of Chen Dewen which the Spanish ambassador Clavijo saw in the early fifteenth century in Timur's court, and the members of which Timur humiliated by ordering them to take a lower seat under the other envoys.

²⁴⁵ Bretschneider, 1888, p. 144-145.

²⁴⁶ This is another name of Fu An.

²⁴⁷ Enoki argues that Bretschneider seems to be careless in the case of Chen Cheng too, in not referring to the Yehubian which gives a short form of the Chen Cheng account. Instead, Bretschneider only refers to the Mingshi and the Huangming dazhengji.

²⁴⁸ Enoki also mentions that this kind of mistake was made by not only Bretschneider, but also Koda Rohan in his historical novel entitled *Unmei* (Fate), first published in 1919.

²⁴⁹ By referring to the return to Samarqand of the Central Asian merchants captured in the battle of 1388 by the Chinese (see Chapter One), Enoki argues that the Fu An embassy was actually not the first mission to Timur,

“normal” lengths, that is usually two years away from China, of which the last one took place in 1415-16. Enoki here stresses the fact that there was no seventh mission of Fu An to Central Asia, by referring to the incorrect statement of the *Mingshiqie* the author of which miscalculated the sum of the years that Fu An spent in Central Asia in total. According to Enoki’s calculation, Fu An spent twenty-three years in Central Asia altogether, while the *Mingshiqie* mentions twenty-two years. Enoki argues that this difference comes from the miscalculation of the author of the *Mingshiqie*, who must have thought that Fu An spent another nine years in Central Asia from 1415 when he was sent to Beshbaliq, and who presumably neglected Fu An’s second, third, fourth and fifth mission.

3.4. The relationship of the Chinggisid and Timurid dynasties

As it was made clear above, the interest of the Japanese scholarship in the Timurid-Ming relations was very obvious in the pre-war times, but it started fading after World War Two. With the decline of the dominance of using Chinese source materials, the subject of interest shifted from the Central Asian-Chinese relations to Central Asian studies themselves. As a result of this shift, the scholars in Japan attempted to grasp and interpret the aspects of the Timurid dynasty in its relationship with the Chinggisid dynasty rather than with China. As it was shown above, such attempts were made in the pre-war times too, but the focus at that time was mainly on the Timurid relationship with China. Here below, I will present briefly two studies published in the 1990s which address the relations between the Timurid and the Chinggisid dynasties. Although this subject does not belong directly to the main focus of the present dissertation, I find useful to give a glimpse into the Japanese academic standpoint in this subject.

Of these two studies, the first one was published in 1992, written by Mano Eiji, who apparently published the most papers in the Timurid

but the second one. However, it is questionable whether the return of those merchants to Central Asia could be regarded as the first official mission from the Chinese court to Timur, since no signs for an official contact-building can be seen from the Chinese side this time.

research in Japan. The title of his article is *Chinggis Khan and Timur: similarities and differences*. Mano starts his article with the *saying* of “Chinggis Khan was destructive, while Timur was constructive”, the origin of which saying Mano is not sure of, but he argues that there must be something true in it. As for the similarities, Mano refers to three major points. Firstly, both Chinggis and Timur were of Mongol origin. In the case of Chinggis, this is an obvious fact. As for Timur, Mano asserts that Timur is a descendent of Karachar Noyan, who was the chieftain of the Barlas tribe, and who followed Chagatai Khan moving to Central Asia.²⁵⁰

Secondly, Chinggis Khan and Timur were nomads, creating nomadic empires that were based on their charismatic personalities in the centre, therefore not surprisingly, their empires started to decline after their deaths.²⁵¹ Thirdly, both rulers were cruel and brutal. Timur, for instance, killed about ninety-one hundred thousand people in Bagdad, seventy-thousand people in Isfahan, one-hundred thousand in India, while he tortured people in Damascus, and built a tower from the heads of his beheaded enemies in Herat. In addition, both of them took lots of craftsmen, scholars etc. from their homelands.

Besides these similarities, the two rulers differed from each other in the following two points. Firstly, they differed in how much they could understand about the life and culture of the sedentary population. As Mano asserts, Chinggis Khan was a typical nomad in the sense that he did not really know much about the life of the settled people. There was not much opportunity for him to learn about these cities. The commercial caravans from China or Western Asia were not many enough to make him know them deeply. However, it was different in the case of Timur, who spent his childhood near the city Kesh. Timur’s generation was already different from

²⁵⁰ Mano notes that Timur was aware of his Mongol origin, however, he never asserted that he was a Chinggisid descendent. Timur’s refusal to use the title khan, and making use of Chagatayid puppet khans instead in whose names he could rule, as well as the fact that he attempted to make a relation with the Chinggisid dynasty by marriage, all show light upon the fact that he did not consider himself as a descendent of Chinggis Khan.

²⁵¹ It has to be added to Mano’s statement that while this was obvious in the case of Timur, after whose death the territory of the empire became less and less, in the case of Chinggis Khan, the territorial expansion was continuing, the process of the empire-building did not stop at all.

the generation coming with Chagatai together to Central Asia a hundred years ago. Though they were of Mongol origin, Timur's generation had abandoned Shamanism for Islam, and they were Turkified in their language too. They had an easy access to learn about the life and culture of the Central Asian cities. Timur must have understood the economic and cultural significance of these cities, which made him take a different attitude to the sedentary population from that of Chinggis Khan.

Secondly, while Chinggis Khan, due to his poor knowledge about the life of the settled people, must have viewed these cities as places for robbing and looting only, Timur was rather constructive. Timur was cruel to those who opposed to him, however, he also paid attention to building. Under his rule, cities as Samarqand and Kesh were experiencing a flourishing period of building. The reason for this constructive attitude was not only due to his understanding about city life, but also because he was a Muslim ruler.

By comparing the two rulers, Mano concludes that the nomadic peoples' attitudes and behaviours may differ from each other according to their understanding about the life and culture of the sedentary population, therefore, to make a comparison of the nomadic people living in the steppes and those who live near cities is an essential issue in the research of the history of the nomads.²⁵²

Kawaguchi Takuji published a very interesting paper in 1996 about the marital relationship of the Chinggisid and the Timurid dynasties. He asserts that although there had been pioneers of this subject as Barthold, Mano, Woods etc., no scholar had turned a special attention to this before. He investigates this relationship in the following three points. Firstly, he discusses the marital relations between the Chagatai emirs and the Chinggisid dynasty, secondly the Timurid dynasty with the Chinggisid dynasty, and finally the succession problems after Timur's death. He gives the following conclusion of his study.

During the warring times among the Chagatai emirs in the middle of the fourteenth century, women from the Tarmashirin, the Yisun Timur, and the Gazan lineage married into tribes such as the Barlas, the Jalail etc. At this

²⁵² Although Mano does not reveal his theoretical standpoint in the research of Central Asia here, but it can be assumed that his article above is to be embedded into his grand theory on the north-south orientation of Central Asia, opposed to Mori Masao's east-west orientation theory.

time, there was only one marriage between the Timurids and the Chagatayids, that is, the marriage between Jahangir, Timur's second son, and Ruqayya. However, after Timur seized power, the number of marriages between the Timurids and the Chagatayids increased. Nonetheless, Timur did not just arrange marriages with the Chagatayids, but also with the Ögödey and Jöchi lines too. In the majority of these marriages, Timurid men married Chigissid women, and there was only one counter-example in which a Timurid woman married a Chinggisid man. All the four sons of Timur married Chinggisid women, therefore, the Timurid dynasty became related with the Chinggisids in many lines on the maternal sides. This interwoven relationship between the two dynasties reached its peak during the time of Ulugh Beg, who did not only marry women from each of the Chagatay, the Ögödey and Jöchi lineages, but also the daughters of Muhammad Sultan, as well as Khalil Sultan. Consequently, Ulugh Beg managed to complete the process of these marital relations starting at the time Timur seized power over Transoxania.

In the study above on these marital relations, Kawaguchi intends to show that Timur did not only want to reinforce his power through conquering wars, but also marriages with the Chinggisid lines, and which practice was continued by his successors too.²⁵³ This active marriage policy with the Chinggisids raises the question again of how the Mongol heritage and the new belief, Islam, could co-exist not only institutionally, but also in the minds of the members of the Timurid dynasty. Horikawa Toru, in his study published in 2000, argues that the political success of Timur was partly due to the fact that he could make a use of Islam successfully. Although he was a Muslim himself too, according to Horikawa, he was not a devout Muslim at all, but rather he used this religion as a political and religious tool only in order to be able to rule over the population in his empire, the majority of which was Muslim.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ Kawaguchi describes this process very detailed, but here I do not find necessary to introduce his paper in detail, since it has little to do with the main interest of the present dissertation.

²⁵⁴ Horikawa wrote a sixty-page study of the Chinggisid and Timurid empire in 2000, however, unfortunately, instead of making a systematic comparison between the two empires, he is contented with discussing these two dynasties separately, without clarifying their relationship. This is the reason for why I did not intend to address his study along with the two other

3.5. Summary

As it was stated above, the academic Japanese research on the Timurid-Ming relationship had eventually become active well before the “boom” in a systematic study of the subject started in the late 1960s in the West, and produced various articles in the subject, including those on the travel accounts of Chen Cheng and Naqqash too. The Japanese researchers paid attention to these relationships much more intensively in pre-war times than the researchers in the West, which could have led to fruitful results in theory-building concerning Central Asia’s history. Therefore, it is rather unfortunate to see that the Japanese academic interest turned away from this subject after World War Two, which turn-away was mostly due to the fact that the knowledge of the Japanese researchers on Central Asian languages suddenly started to improve from the 1970s, which resulted in a shift of interest towards the pre-modern Central Asian states *themselves* rather than its relations with China. This shift, however, is quite understandable, if one takes a look at those student movements in the late 1960s, in which the demand for doing research on Central Asia using Central Asian sources instead of Chinese materials was gradually growing. Nonetheless, this growing demand apparently brought about the afore-mentioned change in the research field. It is also an interesting question of how much Mano Eiji’s theoretical standpoint (the north-south orientation in the history of Central Asia) may have been both a result and a cause of this change at the same time. Nevertheless, giving a stress on the north-south orientation of the Central Asian conditions would probably slow down doing researches on the relationship between Central Asia and China, which would require a presumed east-west orientation.²⁵⁵

studies above.

²⁵⁵ There is another interesting characteristic feature of the change in the research interest. That is to say, the fact that Haneda, Mitsui and Miyazaki searched for non-Chinese sources, appears to be a kind of exception in the dominance of using Chinese materials. Therefore, one can assert that the Timurid-Ming research in Japan rooted partly in the early interest in non-Chinese materials. The subjects of Haneda, Mitsui and Miyazaki etc., however, fitted well into the primary academic interest in Chinese-related

As for the theorisation-level and the approaches used in the pre-war Japanese researches, one can see a good start in the development of an early academic Japanese standpoint in the matter. These first attempts towards developing a higher²⁵⁶ academic standpoint concerning the Timurid-Ming relationship can be seen well in the works of Mitsui and Murakami. Both of them attempted to describe the features of the Timurid-Ming relationship by pointing to its political and commercial aspects. Murakami even recognizes the fact that the early Timurid-Ming contacts were rather of political significance, while after Yongle's death, they became commercial gradually. Nonetheless, the fact that neither Mitsui nor Murakami attributed possible commercial profits to the Chinese court's attitude in their contacts with Central Asian nomads makes both of them take a similar theoretical standpoint to that of Fairbank et al., which excludes commercial interests on the Chinese side due to its Confucian disdain of trade. Twenty-five years prior to Mitsui and Murakami, Haneda addressed the relationship between Timur and the Chinese court directly, and thus he became the second scholar to address this subject.²⁵⁷ Nonetheless, it is a pity that he focused on Timur's planned attack, instead of describing the features of the Timurid-Ming contacts.

matters in pre-war Japan.

²⁵⁶ "Higher" here refers to the attempts to grasp the features of these relationship, instead of just reporting the existence of related Chinese and non-Chinese sources, or just making translations of those source materials.

²⁵⁷ Right after Blochet.

Chapter Four

The Timurid-Ming research in the Chinese literature

In the present chapter, I will address the Chinese literature on the Timurid-Ming relations as the last one among the three (Western, Japanese and Chinese) major subjects. My decision for discussing the Chinese literature in the last place may be disputable, since the Chinese scholars²⁵⁸ have produced the most studies in number²⁵⁹. However, most of these studies have been published since the 1980s, especially the 1990s, which fact throws light on that the subject of the Timurids and the Ming China had not enjoyed a major interest among the Chinese scholars in earlier times. Nonetheless, it does not mean that the Chinese research on the Timurid-Ming contacts started in the 1980s. The first studies were published in the 1930s right after the full texts of the Chen Cheng accounts were found in Tianjin. The finding of these accounts appears to be the trigger for the launch of the growing Chinese scholarly interest in modern times. This points to a quite different issue from the roots of the Japanese scholarly interest, which was highly interwoven with the suddenly growing political interest in Central Asia since the Meiji era. Nonetheless, it is also different from the “boom”²⁶⁰ of the Western studies, which - although it started at the end of the eighteenth century with Chambers’ translation - was triggered by the reaction to the tribute theory of Fairbank et al.

Taking a look at the Chinese studies in the twentieth century, the fact that there seems to be no study produced on the Timurid-Ming contacts in the 1960-70s may appear remarkable. This reflects a break for more than twenty years in this research field. It goes without saying that this break

²⁵⁸ To say Chinese scholars here refers to Chinese scholars of modern times.

²⁵⁹ This fact may not be a surprising one, since it is the Chinese themselves who must be most concerned about the Timurid-Ming contacts as a part of their long history.

²⁶⁰ To say “boom” here does not refer to the number of Western studies, but to producing studies at high theoretical level.

was due to the general decline of social studies at those times. It is after 1979 that social studies regained their official acceptance in China, which fact was due to the new era hallmarked by Deng Xiaoping, making social research possible again. This led to the continuance of the research on the Timurid-Ming contacts, in which field the first study in the new era was published in 1980. Since that time, the Chinese scholars have produced more studies than the Western and Japanese scholars altogether. These studies can be divided into two main subjects. The first one deals with the accounts of Chen Cheng and his life, as well as other Chinese envoys, and the other one deals with the Timurid-Ming contacts themselves.²⁶¹ Therefore, in accordance with this, I will address these studies in two different parts. By doing so, I will follow a similar division made in the previous chapters. Moreover, just as it was done in the chapters about the Western and Japanese literature, I will also discuss the theorisation-level of the Chinese studies, as well as the approaches used in them. I will point out that in spite of the fact that there have been numerous studies produced on these two major subjects, their theorisation-levels do not reach that of those in the West, which fact seems to be partly due to the long break in the 1960-70s, and partly due to the fact that the reference to the Western literature in them has been very limited - though in recent years there seems to be a growing concern in referring to the studies of Western scholars. While the Chinese scholars in the 1930s made reference to the studies of Western scholars such as Chambers, Bretschneider, Blochet etc., after the 1980s, it seems to be mainly the works of Barthold. It appears to be the task of the future scholarly generation to enhance the theorisation-level of the Chinese research on the Timurid-Ming relations. Yet, it is worth making a review of these studies and discussing their contents, not only because it is worth knowing the development of the research on this matter in China, but because one can also find remarkable standpoints in them.

In this chapter, I will address twenty studies or so²⁶² which mainly cover the Chinese literature on the Timurids and the Ming China.²⁶³ These

²⁶¹ Among these studies, there is also an unpublished dissertation that was written just a few years ago, and thereby, this study is to be considered the most detailed one so far.

²⁶² Including those on the Chen Cheng accounts.

²⁶³ Unfortunately, I could not consult the study of Liu Yingsheng, who made a research on the Chinese envoys sent to the Timurid empire before Chen

studies are to be considered the representatives of the Chinese literature, however, one can also discover studies less known from time to time. This may be due to the fact that since the 1990s, the research on the contacts of the Timurids and China has been enjoying a kind of boom. The reason for this boom is unknown to me, but besides a natural scholarly interest in the subject, it may also have some indirect connection with the current political interest in the Central Asian countries²⁶⁴, which interest manifests itself in stressing the ‘traditionally friendly and peaceful’ relationship between China and Central Asia. It may also be noted that what one could see in the case of Japan a century ago may be taking place in present China too. That is to say, a political interest in Central Asia may also promote scholarly activity in an indirect way.²⁶⁵

The present chapter will be divided into three major parts. In the first one, I will address the studies on Chen Cheng, as well as some related subjects, and in the second one, I will discuss the studies on the Timurid-Ming contacts. In the last part, I will give a summary of this chapter.

Cheng was sent there for the first time.

²⁶⁴ As for the current Chinese political interest in Central Asia, see *Zhongguo yu Zhongya* (China and Central Asia) by Xue Jundu and Xing Guangcheng.

²⁶⁵ Chinese works on Central Asia both in the modern and pre-modern times are usually discussed within the framework of the so-called Western Region, which is called the Xiyu in Chinese. However, as Yu Taishan, the editor of the Xiyu tongshi (meaning the general history of the Western Region), the geographical concept of the Xiyu is used in two different meanings in China. One refers to a broader meaning including all Central Asia, while the other one refers to a narrower meaning: Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan). The Chinese researchers have been mainly interested in the history of Xinjiang rather than the general history of all Central Asia, which is a quite understandable fact, since the history of China proper has been interwoven with that of Xinjiang due to the geographical proximity. Therefore, the relationship between China and the Timurids could not really draw remarkable attention of the Chinese scholars until very recently. Before the so-called boom of the studies on this subject in the 1980-90s, the attention to the fifteenth-century Timurid-Ming contacts had been very marginal.

4.1. Studies on the Chen Cheng accounts, as well as Chen Cheng's life

Just as it is the case in the Western and Japanese literature, the frequent embassies of the Chinese and Timurid envoys between the two empires in the early fifteenth century did not escape the attention of Chinese scholars either. However, they have been paying a remarkable attention to the work and life of Chen Cheng than any other envoy, including the account of Naqqash too. Therefore, there is a strong inclination towards Chen Cheng in the Chinese research. Nonetheless, this inclination is quite understandable, since Chen Cheng as a Ming Chinese (so-called domestic) envoy proved to be more interesting for the Chinese academic concern than Naqqash as a foreign envoy. Another reason for the preference for Chen Cheng must be the fact that the Chinese scholars can consult classical Chinese texts much easier than Persian or Turkic ones. They attempt to make academic contributions to the international research on the fifteenth-century Sino-Central Asian relations by interpreting and re-interpreting the classical Chinese texts, as well as correcting the errors in these texts²⁶⁶. No doubt that the Chinese scholars have a great advantage to

²⁶⁶ Unfortunately, there are numerous errors in the Ming Chinese texts that must be recognized and corrected. Zhang Wende points out obvious errors in two smaller sections of the Xiyu (Western Region) chapter in the Mingshi. Both sections refer to the relationship between the two empires, therefore, they bear a significant role in the research on the subject. One concerns the Samarqand section (Zhang, 2000), while the other one refers to Herat (Zhang, 2001). In the latter one, Zhang discusses the interesting problem of having two sections of Herat in the Mingshi under two different names (Halie and Heilou), and being treated as two different cities. At first sight, it seems to be the error of the compilers of the Mingshi in the Qing period. However, Zhang points out that this error was not made by the compilers themselves, but in two former works, the Huangming siyikao and the Mingshilu. Zhang argues that the two transcriptions of the name Herat as Halie and Heilou in the Mingshilu may be due to the fact that the translators in two different bureaus (Gaochang-guan and Huihui-guan) transcribed the name of Herat in different ways, thereby, they caused a confusion in later times - albeit unintentionally. Furthermore, Zhang argues that the description of Heilou in the Huangming siyikao as a close area to Turfan may lie in the fact that the envoys from Herat had to go through this city on their way to China, and therefore, they may have frequently arrived at the Chinese borders together with the envoys from Turfan. Nonetheless,

carry out this important work in order to get a better understanding about the contents of the Chinese texts and their significance in the Timurid-Ming relations.

The fact that Chinese scholars made use of their advantage of reading classical Chinese texts, while hardly using original Persian texts can be also seen in that the two Chinese translations of the Naqqash account were made not from Persian, but from English translations. One was made by Zhang Xinglang, who translated the version of the Naqqash account found in the work of Samarqandi, the *Matla’i Sa’dain wa Majma’i-Bahrain* from Yule’s English translation and published it with other texts together in the *Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huipian* (1978, Vol. 4.). The other one was translated by He Gaoji, who translated it from the version found in Hafiz-i Abru’s work, the *Zubdatu’t-Tawarikh* from the English translation of Maitra. He Gaoji points out the fact that Zhang Xinglang - based on Yule’s translation - concluded erroneously that Prince Baysunqur himself also took part in the mission. Baysunqur himself did not participate in the embassy. Naqqash was eventually representing Baysunqur in the mission, who entrusted him with taking notes of the journey to China.

The series of Chinese studies on Chen Cheng and his accounts actually starts in the 1980s, which fact is remarkable, since almost nothing had been done before these years, although the Chen Cheng accounts were found as early as the 1930s. There have been about nine studies or so published since the 1980s. Among these nine studies, there are two dealing with the accounts themselves, publishing them with commentaries and punctuation for the readers’ better understanding. There are four other studies addressing Chen Cheng’s life and career, as well as his historical significance, two other studies address his poems, and finally, there is a study on Li Xian, who was accompanying Chen Cheng on his missions to Central Asia, and therefore, it is related to the research on Chen Cheng. Eventually, the series of the Chinese studies starts with the study on Li Xian written by Lu Shen in 1983 with a critique on the error made by Xie

this confusion may have also been deepened by the fact that - as Zhang assumes - the Chinese officials at the borders, who must have known the foreign envoys and merchants very well, presumably were corrupt enough to be in cahoots with the foreigners in forging their identities in order to make them enter Chinese border again and again.

Guozhen in his postscripts of the accounts in the 1930s.²⁶⁷

Lu Shen in his study draws attention to the fact that Xie in his postscripts stated incorrectly that the names of Li Xian and Li Da referred to the same person.²⁶⁸ As Lu Shen says, although Xie admitted his mistake in the 1960s, Xie was still denying that there would have been any sign of Li Xian in the *Mingshilu*, which is the most important source of the Ming Chinese texts about Central Asia. Lu Shen asserts that this statement was another mistake made by Xie Guozhen, and that these two mistakes together are too heavy for a Chinese scholar being well-trained in the Ming history. Along with this critique, Lu Shen gives a short summary of Li Xian's life and career. Furthermore, Lu Shen also asserts that both Chen Cheng and Li Xian were actually well-educated intellectuals, and their accounts, the *Xiyu xingchengji* and the *Xiyu fanguozhi* became the source of other Chinese texts in later times to refer to the conditions of Central Asia.²⁶⁹ Finally, Lu Shen argues that the purpose of the embassy of Chen Cheng in 1414 looked on the surface as an escort of the Timurid envoys back to Central Asia, however, in reality, its purpose was to enhance the authority of China, as well as to make the Central Asian cities to bring tribute, and by doing so, to make them acknowledge China as a superior state. In sum, Lu Shen concludes that the purpose of all missions in which Chen Cheng and Li Xian took part in was to promote friendly relationship, commercial contacts, as well as cultural exchange between the Central Asian cities and China. Therefore, Lu Shen asserts that "the historical achievements of these envoys do not only deserve our respect and attention to cherish the memory of them, but they also help deepen our spirit of patriotism and internationalism (in modern times), and it makes us feel proud of having such remarkable envoys and travellers in our country"²⁷⁰.

²⁶⁷ Xie wrote some postscripts about the Chen Cheng accounts after they were found in Tianjin in 1934 and published three years later.

²⁶⁸ Li Da was the actual leader of the embassy, while Li Xian was accompanying it with Chen Cheng and others together.

²⁶⁹ Lu Shen actually misconcludes that Chen Cheng and Li Xian wrote these accounts together. As it will be shown, the author of these accounts was Chen Cheng, while Li Xian may have taken part in its writing, but he was definitely not the author of them. The reason for why Lu Shen refers to these two envoys as the authors of the two accounts must lie in the fact that the names of both envoys are shown at the beginning of the accounts.

²⁷⁰ Lu Shen, 1983, p. 35.

As it will be shown below, this kind of rhetoric praise of the embassy, especially Chen Cheng, is quite common in the Chinese studies.

Tian Weijiang in his study of 1984 writes about Chen Cheng's historical significance in a similar rhetoric way. He asserts that although Chen Cheng did not receive enough attention and acknowledgement during his life, his historical achievements were huge. Tian writes about this in the following way at the end of his study:

“The achievements of the Chen Cheng embassy to Central Asia are obvious... Without taking care of his own safety... Chen Cheng brought a developed economy and culture to Central Asia, expressed the kind regards of the Chinese people to the peoples of the Xiyu, he promoted the political, economical and cultural exchange between the two regions, while he himself was also welcomed by the local people; these all made deep influence on the people there (Central Asia)... Chen Cheng did not only help the Ming Chinese deepen their knowledge on the Western Region, but also our knowledge at modern times, by which we can study the history of Central Asia... Nonetheless, it cannot be escaped to point to the fact that Chen Cheng was a feudal official (after all), who had a prejudice on the minorities at the border area - these can be seen in his writings, and therefore, we have to condemn him for this dross. However, we also have to admit that Chen Cheng did contribute to the development of a friendly relationship between the people of the Ming China and the Western Region. Therefore, he was an outstanding diplomat and traveller.”²⁷¹

Tian Weijiang does not only speak about Chen's historical significance. He also asserts that the tribute-gift exchange between Central Asia and China in reality was nothing but an exchange of products at equal prices: horses from Central Asia to China, while a huge amount of Chinese silk to Central Asia. Tian's standpoint seems to be close to that of Rossabi who disproved the tribute-gift theory of Fairbank et al., by arguing that the Chinese did have commercial interests with Central Asia. However unfortunately, Tian's assertion is not based on the results of a detailed economic analysis, unlike that of Rossabi, but he makes his conclusion from the high frequency of the embassies between the two regions described in the *Mingshi*. Tian does not make a reference to Rossabi's work on this

²⁷¹ Tian Weijiang, 1984, p. 49. Calling Chen Cheng a feudal official appears to be a typical rhetoric phrase in the 1980s.

subject - presumably, Tian was not even aware of the existence of Rossabi's work due to a clumsy access to the works of foreign researchers in the 1980s in China. Such a lack of making reference to the works of foreign literature can be seen in the studies of other Chinese scholars too.

Besides, concerning the importance of the Chen Cheng accounts, Tian points to the question of islamization in Central Asia. The Chen Cheng accounts give various informations about Islamic customs and habits etc. Tian argues that the information found in the accounts shows that while islamization was under process, it had not become dominant yet at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Xue Zongzheng in his study published in 1985 asserts that the Chinese envoys were not really paid attention to by the Chinese court. However, Chen Cheng was a kind of exception, though he was not rewarded properly for his missions by the court either. Like other Chinese scholars, Xue also continues to give the rhetoric praise of Chen Cheng, and in doing so, he seems to be the most active one. Unlike Tian Weijiang, Xue asserts that although Chen Cheng was a feudal official, he did not disdain nomadic peoples, but he wrote about the conditions in Central Asia in a rather objective way in his accounts. For Xue, Chen Cheng is a real hero, who re-connected China and Central Asia. His missions were different from the missions by envoys in the Han and Tang times in that Chen's missions were rather simple and peaceful. According to Xue, Chen made use of the traditional prestige of China in Central Asia, and also the mutual commercial interests, as well as the traditionally friendly relationship with the peoples there. Although this friendly relationship was broken by Timur, Chen Cheng managed to restore it.

To say that Chen Cheng restored the broken relationship with Central Asia must be an exaggerated rhetoric expression rather than a real fact. The improvement of the relations was primarily due to the peace-seeking attitudes of Shah Rukh and the Yongle emperor. Chen Cheng as an envoy may have made contribution to the improving relationship. However, it is definitely not due to him that the contacts between the two empires became peaceful again. Xue attributes too much significance to Chen Cheng's participation in the Timurid-Ming contacts, presumably because of his two accounts. This is not the only point that must be corrected in Xue's study. There are three more things that must be mentioned as mistakes. First of all,

Xue mentions only two missions of Chen Cheng to Central Asia. This is obviously not correct. Chen Cheng was sent there four times altogether, although he was called back at the last time from his way to Herat. It is not quite clear why Xue does not mention the third mission of Chen Cheng, when he did arrive in Herat indeed. Secondly, Xue seemed to have referred to Xie Guozhen's postscripts on the two accounts in asserting that Li Xian was the same person as Li Da. He seemingly did not consult the study of Lu Shen, who had written about this problem just two years before Xue's study was published, since there is no reference to him. Finally, about the question of whether Chen Cheng passed through Khotan and Beshbaliq, Xue is of the opinion that Chen went through neither of these cities. As it will be shown below, Chen Cheng must have gone through Beshbaliq. Unfortunately, Xue's study appears to give more emphasis on describing Chen as a patriot official and as a Chinese hero rather than being precise about the historical facts.

Li Jiang in his study of 1996 reconsiders Xue Zongzheng's standpoint about whether Chen Cheng visited Khotan and Beshbaliq. Li argues that Xue's standpoint about Khotan must be correct. Chen Cheng did not go through this city. However in the case of Beshbaliq, Xue must be wrong. As Li Jiang asserts, the fact that Chen Cheng passed through Beshbaliq can be seen from his poems very obviously. According to Li, these poems refer to the friendly relationship between the peoples of China and Central Asia. Li does not differ from Tian and Xue in the rhetoric way to describe Chen Cheng: "Chen Cheng, as a friendly envoy of the Chinese government and people, expressed peaceful regards to the peoples of Central Asia, promoted mutual understanding and cultural exchange, all these made deep influence. The historical achievements of Chen Cheng must be known and understood."²⁷² He also asserts that the research on Zheng He's seven naval missions pushed the research on Chen Cheng into the background. Besides, Li asserts that the purpose of Chen Cheng's missions was not only to promote friendly relationship, but also to make accounts about the conditions of Central Asia.²⁷³ As for the authorship of the accounts, Li Jiang says that Li Xian

²⁷² Li Jiang, 1985, p. 88.

²⁷³ It is a question of whether Li hereby means that the Chinese emperor would have ordered Chen to take notes about what he sees and hears on his journey to Central Asia, since there is no sign of such an order. It seems to be that these accounts were written by Chen Cheng on his own - without any imperial order. This may be due to the fact that Chen Cheng had been

and Li Da²⁷⁴ can be excluded as the author. Li Jiang argues that Li Da was just not educated enough to be able to write such accounts, while as for Li Xian, there is no reference to the *Xiyu xingchengji* and the *Xiyu fanguozhi* in other works written by Li Xian. Besides, Chen Cheng notes in a different work that the two accounts were written by himself.

In 2000, Ma Junqi published a study in which he attempts to evaluate the significance of the *Xiyu xingchengji*. He argues that there have been only a few researches on the accounts, and he gives an outline of the way Chen Cheng took to Herat. However, Ma does not seem to give new findings here. He asserts that the Chen Cheng accounts are the only Ming Chinese source to know the geographical features, the socio-economic aspects, as well as the religious life of the Central Asian cities. He also mentions Xie Guozhen's error of taking Li Da for Li Xian, which error had been made clear much before Ma pointed to this. As for the authorship of the accounts, Ma asserts that there has been no agreement made on this among the Chinese scholars yet. Nonetheless, Ma himself agrees those who believe that the author must be Chen Cheng alone, while Li Xian's name written next to that of Chen Cheng in the account is nothing but just a formality – partly because Li Xian was superior to Chen Cheng in the official ranking, and partly because Chen Cheng and Li Xian must have been on good terms during their mission to Central Asia.

Yang Fuxue in his study published in 1995 draws attention to newly discovered (ninety-two) poems²⁷⁵ written by Chen Cheng. As Yang asserts, the amount of the ninety-two poems is considerably big - not only in the Ming times, but also throughout the Chinese history concerning poems about the Western Region. As Yang says, Chen Cheng must have been enchanted by the world at the frontier zone so much that he decided to express his feelings in verse in such a special way that was very rare in the Chinese poetry before. It is only recently (after they had been finally found a

removed from official duties for a while because of standing on the wrong side during the internal war between Yongle and Jianwen. Probably, he intended to reinforce his position by giving detailed accounts of the Central Asian conditions for the Chinese court. (Hecker, 1993, p. 88.)

²⁷⁴ The leader of the embassy about which Chen Cheng accomplished his two accounts.

²⁷⁵ Entitled *Xiyu wanghui jixing shi* (meaning Poems on the journey to the Western Region).

few years ago) that Chen Cheng's poems started to draw people's attention. Yang in his study gives a short explanation about these poems too.

In the same year, Duan Hairong also published a study on the Chen Cheng poems. First of all, like other Chinese researchers, Duan points to the fact that although the compilers of the *Mingshi* did not devote a separate chapter for Chen's life, his historical achievements are of great significance, partly because Chen Cheng as an envoy and a diplomat was embodying the Chinese foreign policy in the early Ming times, and partly because of the accounts and poems he left to after-ages. Based on Chen Cheng's poems, Duan describes him as a strong-minded patriot, who had to go through various kinds of hardships: a long and dangerous road to Herat and back to China; an extremely cold weather; home-sickness; as well as the seduction of the richness of the cities he was going through. Apparently, Duan idealizes Chen Cheng as a national hero.

In 1987, the two accounts were published in a punctuated form with some commentaries, in a collection of classical Chinese texts. The chief editor of the collection is Yang Jianxin. The preface written to the two accounts is very short. It is written in the preface that "in the 1950s, the committee for arranging classical Chinese texts decided to publish the *Xiyu xingchengji* and the *Xiyu fanguozhi* together with other classical texts, however, due to a ten-year-long social turbulence, it could not be published, therefore, there has been no edition of a carefully checked and corrected version of the two accounts, but only re-printings of them with some introductory preface."²⁷⁶ Moreover, the preface mentions the mistake of Xie Guozhen taking Li Da for Li Xian and its effects on other scholars such as Deng Yanlin, as well as it also gives a very short description of Chen Cheng's life. Altogether, it does not give much information about the background of the texts and Chen Cheng himself - apparently, it was not the purpose of the editors.

In 1991, the Chen Cheng accounts were published again in a punctuated form with commentaries.²⁷⁷ Wang Jiguang wrote an almost thirty-page-long

²⁷⁶ Guxixingji, 1987, p. 260.

²⁷⁷ The punctuation with commentaries was made by Zhou Liankuan, while Wang Jiguang wrote a long preface to it. Zhang Wende in his study published in 2000 argues that Zhou's work on the texts seems to be the most outstanding one.

summary of Chen Cheng's life and career, as well as his two accounts, which appears to be the longest study among those on Chen Cheng. Wang makes clear that Chen Cheng was first sent to the frontier zone in the 1390s, but he was not sent to Samarqand. Chen Cheng's second mission to the West was in 1414, when he accomplished the two accounts. The third was six months after he came back to China from the second mission. The fourth one in 1420, while the last one was right before the death of Yongle. When Yongle died, the new emperor, Hongxi decided to limit the contacts with the outer-world, and Chen had to stop his mission to Central Asia. According to Wang, just like other Chinese researchers, there is no doubt that Chen managed to strengthen the Chinese-foreign relations and promoted the cultural exchange between China and Central Asia, which makes Chen Cheng gain his historical significance, along with his two accounts. Wang argues that while the *Mingshi* and the *Mingshilu* do not present the whole texts of the accounts, as well as there is very little information about the process of islamization in them, the Chen Cheng accounts (the *Xiyu fanguozhi* first of all) give abundant information about the islamization of Central Asia. As Wang suggests on the base of the Chen Cheng accounts, Islam had deeply penetrated into the life of the people of Herat by the beginning of the fifteenth century. Wang suggests that it be highly useful to compare the section of Herat with that of Huozhou and Turfan in which one can read about buddhist temples in order to understand the degree of islamization of that time.²⁷⁸ Moreover, Wang's information about the various editions of the two accounts helps the reader understand about the differences among these editions. Wang asserts that the Shanben edition of the National Beiping Library is the most complete one.²⁷⁹

Among the studies discussed above, it is only Tian Weijiang who attempted to say something more about the Timurid-Ming contacts than just

²⁷⁸ As for Timur himself, Wang refers to Barthold in saying that Timur actually intended to conquer the whole world, referring to Timur's statement of that the world was not big enough to have two rulers in it. Wang concludes from this that such a wildly arrogant statement, along with Timur's attempted campaign, makes clear that Timur's tributes for ten years was in order to deceive China: to spy on its conditions. Wang argues that Timur definitely had no good intentions to China (right from the very beginning).

²⁷⁹ I also used this edition for making a full translation of the two accounts.

discussing Chen Cheng's life and his accounts. Tian's standpoint about mutual commercial interests between the two empires is close to that of Rossabi, however, unfortunately, it is not based on a detailed analysis. Tian just gives a simple conjecture by making reference to the import of horses to China and the export of silk to Central Asia. Nonetheless, it is not surprising that among the studies on Chen Cheng and his accounts one can hardly find reference to the Timurid-Ming contacts, since it is not the main interest of these studies. One has to turn to other studies which address these contacts directly in order to figure out the various standpoints of the Chinese scholars on the subject.

4.2. Chinese studies on the Timurid-Ming contacts

As it was afore-mentioned, the series of Chinese studies on the Timurid-Ming relations started in the 1930s, and then with a long break in the 1960-70s, it continued from the 1980s. But before turning to these studies, it is worth noting that the research on the Timurid-Ming contacts is still marginal in the research on the Chinese history, which can be seen clearly in the editions of the general history of China. The Timurid-Ming contacts are usually mentioned very briefly, and sometimes not even correctly. The *Zhongguo tongshi* (The general history of China) published in 1999 devotes only three pages for the Timurid-Ming contacts, and even on these three pages one can find some inaccuracy. First of all, it mentions the letter by Timur to Hongwu sent in the middle of the 1390s without any comments on its authenticity problem. The writer of this section seems to accept Timur's letter as authentic. Secondly, it asserts that there were not only diplomatic contacts between the two empires, but private (commercial) contacts were frequent too. However, this is not quite correct. It is true that it was possible for private Chinese merchants to trade with the nomads at the border fairs and the capital market, but their activities were highly limited by the Chinese court, not to mention the fact that they were not allowed to leave Chinese territory. It is another fact that Chinese merchants could get to as far as Aksu, but it was rather illegal for them to do so. The writer of the section of the Timurid-Ming contacts oversimplifies the contacts, giving the impression to the reader as if private contacts between

the Chinese civilians and the nomads had been *legally* allowed. Moreover, the writer of this section argues that except for horse, there was nothing profitable for the Chinese court in the Timurid-Ming contacts, asserting that as a whole these commercial contacts were very disadvantageous for the Chinese. Though the Chinese court was aware of these economic disadvantages, it must have been considering the political gains rather than the economical loss by letting the nomads trade for Chinese goods of high quality. This standpoint stands close to that of Fairbank et al. The writer of the Timurid-Ming section in the *Zhongguo tongshi* just gives a brief summary on the subject, with almost no reference to the works of other scholars. This is rather unfortunate, since as it will be shown below, Chinese scholars on the Timurid-Ming contacts have produced interesting studies since the 1930s.

Shao Xunzheng seems to be the first Chinese scholar addressing the early Timurid-Ming relations in his study published in 1936. First of all, Shao questions the research by the Western scholars such as Chambers, Bretschneider, and Blochet, by pointing to the fact that none of these researchers consulted the Chinese and Persian texts together. As Shao argues, Chambers and Blochet did not consult Chinese texts²⁸⁰, but only Persian ones, while Bretschneider consulted the Chinese texts only. Therefore, Shao decided to use both sources to correct the errors of the Western scholars. First of all, Shao calls the sincerity of Timur's letter sent to Hongwu in the 1390s into question, arguing that Timur's flattering address to the Chinese emperor is nothing but a formality, and it has nothing to do with Timur's real feelings and intentions. Nonetheless, Shao does not doubt the authenticity of the letter, therefore, he does not mention the possibility of that the letter itself may have been forged. Shao also pays attention to the different tones of the two letters of the Yongle emperor to Shah Rukh in 1412 and 1418. In the former one, Yongle treats Shah Rukh as his vassal, while in the latter one, Yongle uses a quite friendly and apparently equal tone to Shah Rukh. Shao argues that the reasons for such a change in the tone is mainly due to the fact that Shah Rukh had been sending tributes to China continuously, as well as to the fact that Yongle needed horses for his campaign against the Mongols in the north.

²⁸⁰ As Shao says, Blochet could read Chinese, yet he did not consult the *Mingshi*.

Nonetheless, the most interesting point of Shao's study is that he concludes:

“Yongle was not just chasing the Mongols in the north, and attempting to restore the old China, but he must also have been following secretly the Yuan dynasty to become the centre of the Mongol empire, since Yongle moved the capital from Nanking to the north, to the original Mongol capital, Dadu. For the countries of the Xiyu, the move of the capital made the Yongle emperor look like a ruler following Mongol traditions, the psychological significance of which cannot be neglected. Therefore, numerous works on the history of the Xiyu misinterpret the Ming dynasty, taking it for the descendants of the Mongols.²⁸¹ It is the task of the ethnographers and historians to find out the origin of and the reasons for this legend, which cannot be the task of the present study. Nonetheless, this legend helps us understand why the countries of the Xiyu today regard the Ming China as a dynasty following Chinggisid orthodox ...”.²⁸²

Shao's standpoint is of high importance. It stands close to Dreyer's position several decades later, who points out the Mongolian features of the early Ming dynasty. It is interesting that Shao as a Chinese scholar had already paid attention to the question of the possible Mongolian feature of the early Ming empire well before Western scholars started to deal with it. As Shao asserts above, he intends to leave this question to future scholars. Shao's study can be considered as a really interesting and important step to draw attention of Chinese scholars to the subject in the 1930s - although it took ten years for the next study to follow it.

Chen Shoushi published a study on the Timurid-Ming contacts in 1947, which can be considered as a miscellaneous summary of several aspects of these relations. First of all, he asserts that there are lots of various Chinese and Western²⁸³ sources about the Timurid history, which have not been arranged properly according to their historical significances yet. One can only see the surface of the travel notes of those (Ming) times. Besides, Chen argues that the Chinese sources about the frontier zone in the Ming times usually come from uneducated people, creating perfunctory official reports, talking everything under the sun. Thereby, Chen makes a critical statement

²⁸¹ Shao does not make clear which books his statement refers to here.

²⁸² Shao, 1985, p. 97-98.

²⁸³ Hereby, Chen seems to refer to both Persian and other Western sources such as that of Clavijo.

about these Chinese sources. Moreover, among others, Chen writes about such questions as the title of Timur, the two alleged Chinese princesses as Timur's wives etc., but what becomes really important in his study is that he does not believe in the authenticity of Timur's letter sent to Hongwu in the middle of the 1390s. Chen argues that Timur's original letter was improved by some official translator in Hami to make it sound flattering for the Chinese emperor, and which fact was not discovered by Hongwu at all. Chen also denies Bouvat's standpoint saying that Timur was China's vassal. Chen argues that Timur's intention towards China was not sincere from the very beginning, which can also be seen in the fact that he detained the Chinese envoys in the second half of the 1390s. As for the Ming's policy towards the Timurids, Chen asserts that while Hongwu attempted to divide the ally of the Mongols in the north and the Islamic Western Region through diplomatic channels, by providing them with Chinese goods such as silk, Yongle was making use of the Ming military to fight the Mongols in the north. Moreover, just like Shao Xunzheng above, Chen also pays attention to the fact that Yongle moved the capital to Dadu, thereby Yongle eventually followed the Yuan dynasty to become the centre of the Mongol empire. As Chen asserts, Yongle's decision to move the capital was not without reasons, however unfortunately, Chen does not make clear what those reasons may have been. Chen's attention to this question may rely on Shao's study, though there is no reference to him. Finally, there is one more important thing in Chen's study. He argues that the commercial contacts between the Timurids and the Ming Chinese were not a kind of simple market trade, because the value of the horses imported from Central Asia were not equal to that of the goods given by China to the nomads. Unfortunately, Chen does not make reference to whether the Chinese were simply applying to a defence policy by giving goods of high value to the nomads, or they had other reasons for doing so.

Ten years after Chen Shoushi published his study, Chen Shengxi chose the Timurid-Ming contacts as the subject of his study in order to deny Xiang Da's standpoint about a presumed relation between Zheng He's first naval expedition and Timur's hostile attitude to China in the early fifteenth century.²⁸⁴ Xiang Da assumes that the first Zheng He expedition may have been set up in order to deter Timur from a possible attack against China.

²⁸⁴ Xiang Da wrote some postscripts of the *Xiyu xingchengji* in 1934.

According to Chen Shengxi, although this was nothing but a conjecture, it made an influence on other Chinese scholars such as Shang Yue who took Xiang's conjecture for granted. However, Chen Shengxi shows light upon that Xiang's conjecture has nothing to do with reality. Chen argues that although one can call Timur's sincerity to China into question right from the beginning, the contacts were normal, and Timur considered himself as a vassal of China - at least on the surface.²⁸⁵ As Chen asserts, neither China nor Timur had real intentions to attack the other, therefore, there was no need for the Chinese to find ways to deter Timur from attacking China. According to Chen, Xiang Da's conjecture calls the peaceful contacts between the Timurids and the Chinese into question and exaggerates the sudden change in Timur's attitude to China at the very end of their relationship in 1404 and 1405. The denial of Xiang Da's conjecture relies on the following points. Firstly, Chen points to the timing problem. Timur died early 1405, which is also the year that the first Zheng He expedition took place. However, the Zheng He expeditions did not stop with Timur's death, but continued until 1433, well after Timur's death. Secondly, there is also a geographical inconsistency of the route taken by the Zheng He expedition and the geographical boundaries of the Timurid Empire. According to Xiang, the Zheng He expedition was supposed to display its strength at the hinterland of the Timurid Empire, that is Iran, and which the Zheng He expedition did reach indeed, however, the expedition did not go to Iran only, but also to Africa etc., places that had nothing to do with Timur. Moreover, Chen also doubts that the Chinese would have had any concrete information about the whereabouts of the hinterland of Timur's empire. Thirdly, Chen also draws attention to that neither Xiang nor Shang uses concrete facts to prove that the Zheng He expedition was directed towards Timur, therefore, the standpoint of Xiang and Shang does not go beyond a simple conjecture. Chen Shengxi argues that the launch of the Zheng He expedition was due to the improving economical conditions in the early fifteenth century rather than any political motivation against the Timurid Empire. As for the Timurid-Ming contacts in the early times, Chen argues that these contacts were basically peaceful, especially after Timur's death, however, Chen does not tell us more than this about the contacts themselves. The purpose of his

²⁸⁵ Chen argues that the detain of Kuan Che in Beshbaliq was due to the fact that Beshbaliq was being drawn towards Timur.

study was to disprove the standpoint of Xiang Da and Shang Yue after all..

After Chen Shengxi's study, there was a long break in the Timurid-Ming research until 1980, when Zhao Lisheng decided to publish a paper about this subject. Actually, Zhao does not focus here on the Timurid-Ming contacts themselves, but he attempts to describe the relationship between China and Central Asia as a whole in the early Ming China. First of all, Zhao points out that in the Western Region there were so many peoples worshipping different religions and fighting with each other that it was not possible to unite this huge area - unlike the time of the first Chinese emperor, Qin shihuangdi. Zhao mentions Beshbaliq, Samarqand and Herat as cities with which China had good relations. He argues that Beshbaliq was looking for an ally with the Chinese court and asking for its help in a fear of Timur's military action against itself. Beshbaliq received a seal, a hat and a belt from China as symbols of a subordinate relationship with China. Thereby, according to Zhao, Beshbaliq became a kind of Chinese vassal. Zhao's standpoint is just the opposite of that of Chen Shengxi who assumes that Beshbaliq was actually on the side of Timur, since it retained Kuan Che, the envoy sent by China. The difference in their opinions lies in the fact that Chen and Zhao pay attention to different aspects of the contradictory Beshbaliq-Chinese contacts, which contradiction lies in the buffer-zone character of Beshbaliq lying just between the two empires. Zhao argues that China maintained good relationship with the Central Asian cities both economically, politically and militarily.²⁸⁶ Furthermore, Zhao also argues that the formation of mutual political and military²⁸⁷ contacts between China and Central Asia were based on the commercial contacts first of all, however. It is a pity that Zhao does not really explain how this formation might have been taking place.

Besides, as for the golden age of the Central Asian-Chinese contacts in

²⁸⁶ Although Timur's intended attack on China does not refer to this peaceful relationship, Zhao does not devote much attention to this question. Nonetheless, he argues that the Chinese received news about Timur's plan well in time, and therefore they could get prepared for it. This statement sounds rather challengable, since in reality, the Chinese seem to have been informed of Timur's plan quite late.

²⁸⁷ Of course, it seemed to be almost impossible to maintain an active military cooperation between the Timurids and the Ming China due to the huge geographical distances.

the early Ming times²⁸⁸, Zhao argues that Yongle, though he was a feudal ruler, did not have prejudice against the nomads. To choose a modern phrase, he was not discriminative to them. Yongle was an enlightened ruler, who often ordered to release the men and women captured in his campaigns against the Mongols, and who was employing Mongols to be at his service too. Yongle intended to maintain good relationship with all the peoples along the border. Furthermore, Zhao argues that all the Central Asian cities were in a subordinate position with China, including the Timurid Empire too. Zhao's conclusion is based on Yongle's letter sent to Shah Rukh in which Yongle attempts to intervene into the internal problems of the Timurid Empire by suggesting to Shah Rukh that he should make peace with his nephew, Khalil. It is a pity that Zhao does not pay attention Yongle's letter sent to Shah Rukh a few years later in which he addresses the Timurid ruler as an equal partner.

According to Zhao, the contacts between the two empires started declining after Yongle's death, which process reached its deep point at the end of the sixteenth century and did not get recovered until the beginning of the Qing dynasty in the seventeenth century.

In 1990, Feng Xishi in his study draws attention to the Jinling Wenshi jiapu, which work refers to the family tree of a Mr. Wen Houhua from the Xinjiang University. According to this family tree, one of Wen Houhua's ancestors, called Wen-er-li, was a man from Samarqand, who was sent to the Chinese capital (Nanking) by Timur in 1388, and then retained by Hongwu. The reason for why Hongwu decided to make him stay in the Chinese capital was that when Hongwu had taken Nanking twenty years earlier, after chasing the Mongols out of there, he found Arabic and Persian texts left behind. Among these, there were texts on astronomy and calendars that noone in Hongwu's court was able to read. Therefore, Hongwu was very happy to see that among the people sent by Timur from Samarqand, there

²⁸⁸ Zhao also points to the fact that in reality there were many illegal things taking place in the everyday life. For example, Chinese border officers and soldiers were sometimes helping Central Asian merchants get through the borders, or they were buying horses, as well as selling weapons and other luxurious goods secretly outside the border. Central Asian merchants were also buying poor Chinese women and taking them outside of China. However, according to Zhao, all these phenomena could not become dominant due to a strong Chinese control.

were also some scholars who were able to read those texts. Hongwu asked them to stay in Nanking and help him understand their contents. Wen-er-li was one of them. According to Feng, the fact that Muslim astronomers were employed in the Chinese court throughout the Ming history must root in Hongwu's decision in the early times. Feng argues that the reason for doing so does not only rely on the traditionally friendly contacts between the Central Asians and the Chinese, but also the concrete contacts of the two empires at those times.

Liu Guofang in his study published in 1992 addresses the control of the Ming Chinese court over Central Asia, first starting with the military garrisons at the Chinese border, then addressing the cities in Moghulistan, and then finally the Timurid Empire. Liu uses the concept of "national conflict", as well as the Marxist concept of "class conflict" to describe the reasons for the big Chinese peasant movements against the Yuan Mongol rulers in the thirteenth century. He also points to the fact that the Xiyu was a highly important region for the newly established Ming dynasty - to maintain good relations with the Central Asian cities - in order to be able to fight the remains of the Mongols in the north. Hongwu and Yongle created garrisons at the Chinese border that could enjoy much more freedom than those inside the country. These were often led by non-Chinese tribes. Among these garrisons, it is Hami that was the most significant one, a so-called defence wall of China, which did not only send tribute to the court, but also provided military help and information on the Central Asian conditions. The ruler of Hami received the Chinese title *zhongshunwang*²⁸⁹, which reflects a subordinate vassal relationship with China. Liu argues that the closeness of the relationship with the Central Asian cities was in direct proportion with their distances from China, therefore, the contacts with the Timurids could not be of high significance, but just limited to tribute-bringing contacts.²⁹⁰ Liu denies that there would have been any economically significant contacts between the Chinese and the Timurids. According to him, this was due to the fact that the Timurids were not a vassal of China. Nonetheless, Liu also

²⁸⁹ Meaning "loyal and obedient king".

²⁹⁰ Liu argues that Khotan and Kashgar sent tribute much less frequently than other cities. This was mainly due to their closeness to the Timurid empire, which must have exercised control over them. Timur limited the freedom of the cities subordinate to him to prevent them from maintaining close relationship with China.

argues that the subordinate relationship with China in the case of other Central Asian cities promoted close economic and cultural contacts, taking place in the form of tribute-gifts and trade at the (capital and border) markets²⁹¹. Moreover, Liu also argues that these economic and cultural contacts promoted the formation of a political unity between China and the Xiyu (the Western Region), and that this must have laid the foundation of the unity of the peoples of China at later times. However, it is a pity that Liu does not really make clear exactly what he means by a political unity here. Probably, he refers to the relatively friendly contacts both in the fifteenth century and during the Qing dynasty, but he forgets about both Timur's intended attack in 1405 and the Tumu incident in 1449, when Esen captured the Chinese emperor. The latter even promoted a general distrust of the Chinese court and officials towards the nomads in the north. Nonetheless, Liu's standpoint seems to be close to that of Ralph Kauz, who also focused on the formation of a possible political unity between the Chinese court and the Timurids, even though Liu does not refer to the Timurids here as the subject of such a possible formation, but the nomads living closer to China first of all. Yet, Liu's focus on the political unity between China and the Xiyu appears to be unique among the studies of the Chinese scholars.²⁹²

Zhu Xinguan in his study of 1996 addresses the Timurid-Ming contacts directly, asserting that the studies on these contacts are still few. Zhu first makes an outline of the main features of these contacts from the beginning to the time they started to fade, and then he attempts to distinguish significant phases in their historical process. Zhu argues that Timur's letter sent to Hongwu in the 1390s must be authentic and sincere in its contents due to the next two reasons. Firstly, Timur must have been afraid of the

²⁹¹ As for the Chinese-controlled markets, Liu asserts that these markets were rather marginal, which could not go through significant changes throughout the fifteenth century. Moreover just like other scholars, Liu also points to the fact that illegal activities were quite common between the Chinese and Central Asian nomads at the border, as well as that there were many Central Asian merchants pretending to be sent by some Central Asian ruler to bring tribute to China in order to gain commercial profits.

²⁹² As it has been shown above, other scholars talk about the traditionally general friendly relationship between China and Central Asia, however, none of them talks about a political unity between them.

Ming China's power - at least in the beginning, therefore, he intended to maintain good relationship with it, and by doing so, Timur also attempted to hinder the formation of a possible ally between China and other Central Asian cities against him. Secondly, Timur was eager after Chinese goods of good-quality, therefore, he intended to keep the commercial routes open. Zhu argues that Timur's attempted campaign against China was not a plan from the very beginning of his military and political career, but the result of his numerous victories throughout Asia. According to Zhu, these military successes must have gone to the head of Timur to decide to attack China. However, after Timur's unsuccessful attack, the relationship became normal again, and Shah Rukh became a vassal of China. Zhu refers his standpoint to the early letter sent by Yongle to Shah Rukh in which Yongle asks him to finish the internal war with Khalil Sultan. Apparently, Zhu does not take Yongle's other letter sent in 1418 into account in which Yongle treats him as an equal ruler.

After the blooming period in the early fifteenth century during the time of Yongle, the relations started declining, which fact, according to Zhu, was primarily due to the growing significance of the naval routes. As a result, innerland routes were no longer important. This standpoint stands close to that of Fairbank, who pointed to the connection between the declining innerland routes and the strengthening naval routes in the history of the Chinese-foreign relations - albeit there is no reference to Fairbank in Zhu's study. Finally, Zhu distinguishes the next three phases in the Timurid-Ming contacts. The first one starts with a good relationship, when Timur was an alleged vassal of China. The second one refers the time when Timur decided to attack China, thereby, the relations got broken. After this unsuccessful attack, the contacts became normal again, leading to a blooming period. Zhu does not take the slowly declining period after Yongle's death into account, he focuses on the early Ming contacts only. Altogether, apart from Timur's plan against China, Zhu argues that the relationship was good throughout the early Ming times.

Gao Yongjiu in a study published in 1999 takes a similar standpoint as Zhu Xinguang, arguing that Timur's letter to Shah Rukh must be authentic and sincere in its contents, because Timur intended to maintain good economic relationship with China for his campaigns in other regions. Nonetheless, Gao may not be aware of Zhu's study, since he argues that

there are still many things concerning the Timurid-Ming contacts that must be made clear, and the question on the authenticity of Timur's letter is one of these disputed questions. Gao is correct in saying this. However, the fact that he does not make reference to Zhu's study is a pity. Moreover, Gao also points to the question of when the early contacts started. He denies Chen Shoushi's standpoint saying that the first contact must have taken place in 1388 when the captured Central Asian merchants were sent by Hongwu back to Samarqand. Gao argues that the first contact took place in 1387 when the first Timurid embassy was sent to China. This is correct again. However, this is not a new finding, because both foreign and Chinese researchers had already pointed this out.

What becomes really original in Gao's study refers to the Fu An embassy. Gao argues that the Fu An embassy sent by Hongwu in 1395 was not detained by Timur at all, therefore, Fu An and the other envoys were actually free to go home. Gao refers to Zhang Xinglang's finding (1978, Vol. 5., pp. 198-199.), who points to the difference between the Mingshi and Saraf ad-Din Ali Yazdi's Zafarname concerning the Fu An embassy. According to Zhang, while the Mingshi writes about the detain of the Fu An embassy, there is no such reference to them in the Zafarname. By focusing on Zhang's finding, Gao takes the Zafarname as authentic, and calls the contents of the Mingshi into question. Moreover, Gao also points to Clavijo's accounts, in which one can read about the humiliating seat change²⁹³. He also argues that since this seat change had not happened before Clavijo arrived in Timur's court in the first years of the fifteenth century, it means that Timur must have been treating the members of the Fu An embassy as respected guests before.²⁹⁴ Furthermore, the fact that Fu An was taken by Timur to show him around in his huge empire must have been also the result of Timur's respect to him, and not for some display of his force to deter China from humiliating him. Therefore, Gao concludes that the theory of the detain of the Fu An embassy must be wrong. Gao attempts to find the reasons for why Fu An and the others did not return to China in time. He

²⁹³ Timur ordered the Chinese envoys to take seats lower than that of the Spanish envoy.

²⁹⁴ Gao here must be wrong in saying that there was no other Chinese embassy in Timur's court at the time of Clavijo's arrival. The Chen Dewen embassy sent in 1397 by Hongwu to Timur to ask about the Fu An embassy could not return to China either.

argues that the reasons for this mainly lies in the political conditions in the Xiyu at those times, that is, Moghulistan was hindering the traffic on the roads between the two empires. According to Gao, Moghulistan was doing so because of its fear of another attack from the Timurid Empire.

Gao's argument about the Fu An embassy is very unique. His denial of the detain theory of the Fu An embassy is based on the assumption that Timur was actually maintaining friendly relationship with China until 1404. Yet unfortunately, Gao leaves the question open why Timur suddenly turned against China in the end.

In 2004, the afore-mentioned Wang Jiguang published a study in which he addresses the career of Chen Cheng as the most important envoy and the early Timurid-Ming contacts together. His study is the first one to do so. First of all, Wang argues that our knowledge about the frequency, dates, as well as the activities of Chen Cheng's missions to Central Asia had been a little chaotic, so he devotes to make these all clear in this study.²⁹⁵ By doing so, Wang refers to a newly found Chen Cheng account²⁹⁶ which account makes easier to clarify the obscure points about his missions. These are the following:

1. The first mission: from the third month to the ninth month in 1396 to the Sari Uighurs to establish the garrison called Anding.²⁹⁷
2. The second mission: from the ninth month in 1413²⁹⁸ to the tenth month in 1415 to escort some Central Asian envoys back home and to give gifts to the local rulers. The end of his mission was Herat.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁵ Wang actually returns to the question raised by himself in the preface of the edition of the Chen Cheng accounts in 1991, and attempts to give correct answers to those questions.

²⁹⁶ The *Liguan shiji*.

²⁹⁷ Wang gives the months according to the classical Chinese calendar, as they are written in the sources, without identifying them with the Western calendar. The months in the Chinese calendar are usually one or two months behind the Western one.

²⁹⁸ This is not the date of the start of his mission, but the date of receiving Yongle's order.

²⁹⁹ His accounts were written during this mission. Wang assumes that Li Xian may have helped Chen with accomplishing them.

3. The third mission: from the sixth month in 1416 to the fourth month in 1418, the purpose of the mission is the same as in the second one.³⁰⁰
4. The fourth mission: from the tenth month in 1418 to the eleventh month in 1420, the purpose of the mission is the same as in the second and third ones.
5. The fifth mission: from the fourth month to the eleventh month in 1424 that suddenly came to an end by the interruption of Yongle's death. Chen Cheng was called back from his way to Central Asia.

Wang's work above is highly important to the researchers on Chen Cheng, since Wang's study is the first one to clarify the facts about Chen Cheng's missions and his career.

As for the Timurid-Ming contacts, Wang attempts to give a full-scale description, however unfortunately, his study does not appear to add highly new standpoints to the studies discussed above. What may be important about his study here is that although Wang does not call the authenticity of Timur's letter to Hongwu into question, he argues that Timur was a vassal of China only on the surface, saying that in reality, Timur was deceiving China, spying on it and was eager after abundant commercial profits. The fact that Timur detained the Fu An embassy is also a sign of his improper behaviour.³⁰¹ Wang also points to the fact that while the roads between China and Central Asia were hindered by the wars at the end of the Yuan dynasty, thereafter, the roads were open again, and the Central Asian-Chinese contacts could develop without mishap at the beginning of the fifteenth century, leading to the last blooming period of the Silk Road. As Wang asserts, the Chen Cheng missions made significant contribution to strengthening the Chinese-foreign relations and promoting the cultural exchange between China and the Xiyu.

Finally, I will address Zhang Wende's unpublished dissertation

³⁰⁰ Wang notes that the frequent missions between the two empires were partly due to the achievements of Chen Cheng.

³⁰¹ Wang apparently is either not aware of Gao Yongjiu's denial of the detain of the Fu An embassy, or he just simply does not take it into consideration.

completed in 2001, in which Zhang gives the most comprehensive research about the Timurid-Ming contacts in China.³⁰² Since Rossabi's dissertation of 1970 does not address the Timurid-Ming contacts directly, which focuses on Hami rather than the Timurid dynasty itself, Zhang's dissertation can be counted as the first really full-scale study on the subject - not only in China, but in the world too. However, it also has to be made clear that Zhang's study is not the only one any longer to study the Timurid-Ming contacts profoundly, since Ralph Kauz also addresses the same subject in his book published in 2005.³⁰³ However, the two studies are quite different in their main messages. Although both studies focus on the Mingshilu as their main sources, and both researchers touch upon similar subjects at the end of their studies, such as the question of how the Chinese treated those Central Asians who decided to settle down in China, Kauz's study raises the question of the formation of a possible political unity between the Timurids and the Ming Chinese, while Zhang's dissertation appears to be much more modest in its final goal. Although Zhang asserts at the beginning of his dissertation that his study is the most systematic one, it seems to be rather a miscellaneous study. He touches upon various aspects of the contacts rather than raising a theoretical question and attempting to give a final answer to it.³⁰⁴

³⁰² It is interesting to see that Wang Jiguang above does not mention Zhang's dissertation at all. The question remains open whether the reason for this is that Zhang has not published his dissertation yet.

³⁰³ See Chapter Two.

³⁰⁴ Zhang divides his dissertation into seven chapters. In the first one, he discusses both the Chinese and non-Chinese sources, but eventually focuses on the Chinese ones. In the second chapter, he addresses the Ming's policies towards the Timurids that can be divided into three phases. In the third chapter, Zhang addresses the Chinese envoys to Central Asia, pointing out that except for Chen Cheng and Chen Dewen, none of these envoys may have been well-educated. He also makes clear that the leadership of these embassies were usually eunuchs and high or middle-level officials, while the rest of the missions consisted of low-level officials. Zhang assumes that most of these officials must have had difficulties in keeping their dignities and nobilities during their missions. The fourth chapter is about the Timurid missions. Zhang argues that the Timurid envoys usually had higher social positions. The fifth chapter is about the tributes and rewards, while the sixth one is about the diplomatic rituals, as well as the lingua franca used between the two empires. He points out that Persian played the main role as

Zhang describes his findings in the following way:

1. First, he proves that the Chinese sources on the Timurid-Ming contacts at the end of the Ming dynasty and the beginning of the Qing dynasty are mainly based on two sources: the Chen Cheng accounts and the Mingshilu.
2. He describes the development of the contacts in three phases: a beginning phase (1387-1405), a renewing and developing phase (1407-1449), and finally a declining phase (1450-1550). Besides, he also points to the fact that the prospering and declining periods of the two empires coincide.
3. Zhang suggests that the contacts between the Timurids and the Ming Chinese court were mainly economical and commercial, which was especially important for the Timurids whose missions outnumbered the Chinese embassies. There were seventy-eight missions from the Timurid Empire, while there were only twenty from China.
4. Zhang also discusses the diplomatic rituals of the two empires.
5. Finally, he touches upon the way the Chinese treated the Central Asians who intended to settle down in China.

Among the five points above, the first three appear to be the most important ones. Firstly, the fact that the Chinese sources at the late Ming and early Qing times rely on either the Chen Cheng accounts or the Mingshilu helps one estimate the value of the Chinese sources. Secondly, Zhang's division of the historical process into three phases described above relies on the following. Zhang argues that apart from the last years of Timur's life when he decided to attack China, the Timurid-Ming contacts were rather peaceful and friendly. He suggests that Timur turned against China because he became too powerful in his war campaigns, which finally

a diplomatic language, while Turkish and Mongolian might have been used as well. The seventh chapter discusses the arrangement of the immigrants from the Timurid empire to China. Zhang argues that these people, who were usually settled down by the Chinese in Peking, Nanking and Ganzhou, became an important part of the Hui Muslims during the Ming times.

made him turn his attention to China as a place to conquer.³⁰⁵ This must have led to the detain of the Fu An embassy in the 1390s too. Zhang argues that the contacts between the two empires could be restored easily after Timur's death due to the commercial contacts having developed in Timur's time before he attempted to attack China. This led to a blooming period of the two empires. As for the second turning point in the Timurid-Ming relations, Zhang points to the Tumu incident in 1449 when the Chinese emperor was captured by Esen. Thirdly, Zhang argues that the Timurid-Ming contacts were first of all commercial ones, which fact can also be seen in the rapid restoration of the contacts after Timur's death. Moreover, Zhang argues that these commercial contacts were mutually profitable. However, although Zhang speaks about mutually profitable contacts, he mainly refers to the Timurids, whose missions to China outnumbered that of the Chinese to Central Asia due to the fact that the value of the return gifts from the Chinese for the tribute goods was much higher. According to Zhang, it was because the actual economic centre was China, and not the Timurid Empire. However, it is a pity that Zhang seemingly did or could not consult Rossabi's dissertation, since Rossabi pointed out the significance of the commercial interests for the Chinese court as early as 1970.

4.3. Summary

As for the Chinese literature on the Timurid-Ming contacts, two contradictory facts can be concluded. Firstly, the Chinese researchers have produced more studies on both the Timurid-Ming contacts directly, as well as on the Chen Cheng accounts and Chen Cheng himself as a related subject, than the researchers in the West and Japan together. This fact may not be surprising at all, since the history of the Timurid-Ming contacts is a part of the Chinese history. However, it is an interesting fact that modern research

³⁰⁵ Zhang notes that although the Chinese court learned about Timur's war plan and ordered Song Sheng to get prepared after Timur was actually dead, this lateness cannot be considered as "late", if one takes the slow speed of information transfer of those times into account. Zhang argues that the Chinese reaction was actually quite "fast".

in China on this subject had not become popular before the 1980s, therefore, most of these studies were made in the last twenty years or so. On the other hand, although Chinese scholars have been the most productive in the number of studies, the theorisation-level of these studies is very low, which fact seems to rely partly in the few references to the studies of both foreign scholars and (domestic) Chinese researchers. This fact gives one the impression that there may be not enough communication among the Chinese scholars about this subject, or even if there is, it is not revealed in their studies. This can be seen in the various descriptions of the authenticity problem of Timur's letter sent to Hongwu, and his possible relationship with China³⁰⁶, as well as the relationship of Beshbaliq with China etc. Nonetheless, there is a general agreement among the Chinese scholars about Chen Cheng's role in the relationship of the two countries, that is, Chen Cheng was a strong-minded patriot, a real hero. The significant role of Chen Cheng as an envoy in the Timurid-Ming contacts is – no doubt – of high significance. However, his significance is often described by solemn rhetorical phrases. As for the aspects of the Timurid-Ming relationship, most of the Chinese scholars agree in that China and the Timurid Empire maintained mutually profitable commercial contacts, however unfortunately, these conclusions do not rely on careful analyses as Rossabi did, but rather on conjectures. Apparently, the Chinese scholars have not consulted the Western scholars' standpoints (such as Fairbank and Rossabi) about this question properly.³⁰⁷ It seems to be that the Chinese scholars before the 1980s put more emphasis on consulting the Western researchers than they did in the 1980-90s, such as Shao Xunzheng and Chen Shoushi in the 1930-40s, who even drew attention to the Mongol heritage of the early Ming era – referring to Yongle, well before Dreyer addressed this important question. It is a pity that Chinese scholars themselves later did not pay enough attention to this question.

On the other hand, Chinese scholars have made significant contribution to the research of the Timurid-Ming contacts primarily by correcting the

³⁰⁶ Including the question of whether Timur was a kind of vassal of China or not.

³⁰⁷ There are only two scholars who have different opinions about the economic-based relationship between the two empires: Chen Shengxi and Liu Guofang.

classical Chinese texts, as for example Zhang Wende, and the dates and purposes of the Chen Cheng missions, such as Wang Jiguang. The next step for the Chinese scholarship seems to be in coordinating their possibly fruitful efforts and in enhancing the theorisation-level of their research on this subject.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

In the last chapter, I will first summarize the main points made clear in the previous chapters, then attempt to outline possible future trends in order to show that the research on the Timurid-Ming contacts has not come to an end, but it can provide a treasury of information for further research on Chinese and Central Asian history.

The first thing that must be mentioned about the characteristics of the Timurid-Ming research is the preponderance of Sinology as compared to Persian or Turkic studies. It goes without saying that this fact is not due to a presumably stronger effect of the contacts on the Chinese side. The contacts between the Timurids and the Chinese of the Ming period were obviously mutual, so impacts can be detected on both sides. But it can safely be assumed that these contacts may have exerted a deeper effect on the life of the peoples of Central Asia than the other way round.³⁰⁸ The reason for the preponderance of Sinology lies in the fact that there are much more sources written in classical Chinese than in Persian or Turkic, even though most of the Chinese sources can be traced back to two main sources: the Chen Cheng accounts and the Mingshilu. Nonetheless, the fact that there are more Chinese sources than Persian, may contradict the assumption that these contacts had more effects on the Central Asian side than on the Chinese one. This interesting contradiction is due to the assumption of that the effects of the contacts must have been stronger in Central Asia rather than in China on the level of the common people, while one can see a reversed situation on the official level. The Timurid Empire could never really show up a clear-cut foreign policy³⁰⁹, while China had been

³⁰⁸ The reason for this assumption is that the people in China's inland could hardly have any contacts with the Central Asian nomads, while the peoples of Central Asia, along the Silk Road, were exposed to the Chinese-nomad contacts through an active flow of Chinese goods they that they were so much eager to receive.

³⁰⁹ Not even at the time of Timur when the Timurid Empire was the most united. After Timur's death, the various Central Asian cities enjoyed a relatively great freedom that hindered the Timurid rulers from developing a

administered through a well-defined administrative system for centuries. In addition, China had always felt the imminent danger of the “barbarians” around its borders. In the fifteenth century this fear was certainly even stronger than at usually due to psychological after-effects of the overturned Mongol Yuan dynasty in the late fourteenth century. So no wonder that the Ming Chinese court paid special attention not only to the northern border area where the Mongols had to withdraw, but also to the north-western region where a new dynasty of Mongol origin emerged simultaneously with the foundation of the Ming dynasty.

As shown in the previous chapters, there are three main aspects to be distinguished in the foreign policy of the Ming China:

1. the traditional Confucian prestige over non-Confucian “barbarians”, with China, more precisely the Chinese capital, in the centre of the world, which prestige does not allow the emperor to treat the rulers of other regions as equal;
2. the Chinese fear of a military conquest of the “barbarians”, which led to a general concern about the defence of China;
3. the possible economic interests in the form of tribute from and trade with the “barbarians”, which interests - theoretically - contradicts the Confucian teaching of disdaining commerce as an inferior activity.

The studies on the Timurid-Ming contacts in the Western, Japanese and Chinese literature mainly address one of these three - cultural, political (military) and economic - aspects and attempt to take a standpoint in describing the contacts between the two empires.

The development of the Timurid-Ming research can be summarized as follows. The international research started with Chambers’ translations from Persian into English in the late eighteenth century, but unfortunately, he did not attempt to give explanations about the features of these contacts. Translations with or without commentaries were typical of the research up to the late nineteenth century, including Bretschneider, whose translations are of high significance, but unfortunately, he also failed to discuss the features of the Chinese contacts with Central Asia. The first researcher who addressed the Timurid-Ming diplomatic contacts directly was Edgar Blochet

united and comprehensive China policy.

in the early twentieth century, arguing that the Timurids (including Timur himself) were actually vassals of the Ming China. Although Blochet's assertion was challenged successfully in later times, one can see a long break after Blochet in the Timurid-Ming research in the West. Instead, it is the Japanese scholarship that received the torch from the Western researchers, though neither the Western nor the Japanese researchers were apparently aware of this take-over. It is Haneda Toru who first addressed the Timurid-Ming contacts in 1912, whose efforts were followed by other Japanese scholars in pre-war times. However, unfortunately, these efforts eventually came to an end after World War Two. The active scholarly interest in the subject in pre-war Japan was embedded into the political interest in Central Asia at those times, which was also promoted by the fact that the pre-war Japanese scholars were dominantly better at reading classical Chinese texts rather than Central Asian languages. However, from the 1970s, the Japanese scholars became more and more familiar with Central Asian languages, which led to a shift of research interest from the Timurid-Ming contacts towards the Timurid dynasty itself. Thereby the first promising initiatives in pre-war Japan were not followed by other scholars after World War Two properly. From the 1960s, Western scholars turned their attention to the Timurid-Ming contacts on a surprisingly high theorisation-level, as if Western scholarship had jumped over some degrees between the level of "just" making translations and that of giving elaborated theories on the subject. However, this sudden appearance of studies with a high theorisation-level was not due to a presumable continuance of the first Japanese initial studies in pre-war times. Fletcher's study³¹⁰ and Rossabi's dissertation at the turning point of the 1960-70s are to be considered primarily as reactions to the tribute theory hallmarked by Fairbank and others. Although Fletcher and Rossabi call the tribute theory into question from different aspects³¹¹, both studies were motivated by disproving the paramount ideology of Confucianism in real life. Kauz's study appears to

³¹⁰ Though Fletcher himself did not say that his purpose was to disprove the tribute theory, his findings indicate an opposite standpoint to that of the tribute theory.

³¹¹ Fletcher questions the ideology of the all-mighty Confucian prestige over the "barbarians" in the realpolitik, while Rossabi proves that the Ming Chinese court did have commercial interests through its contacts with the peoples of Central Asia.

accept these new findings and attempts to give a unique approach by shedding light upon a possible political unity between the two empires, which unity never came into existence. It seems as if the Timurid-Ming research in the West had taken back the torch from the first Japanese initial studies without being aware of this transmission again.

As for the Chinese literature, the first initial studies appeared almost at the same time as in Japan, and it also produced promising results. Shao Xunzheng's reference in his study to the works of Western researchers such as Chambers, Bretschneider and Blochet by pointing to the weakness of their works can be considered a good start. Moreover, pointing out the Mongol heritage in governing in the early Ming times by Shao Xunzheng and Chen Shoushi is also to be regarded as a significant finding, which however was not followed by other Chinese scholars at later times. The long break in the Timurid-Ming research in the 1960-70s seems to have cut the Chinese scholarship off the international research trends, therefore, it is not surprising to see Barthold as the almost only foreign reference point in the Chinese literature during the 1980-90s.³¹² Consequently, although Chinese scholars have produced numerous studies on the Timurid-Ming contacts, the theorisation-level of these studies is to be regarded as very low.³¹³ Zhang Wende's dissertation is an exception, since he attempted to summarize and discuss the Timurid-Ming contacts in various aspects. By doing so, Zhang did more than any other Chinese researcher had done before. Nonetheless, the theorisation-level of his dissertation seems to need some improvement to hit international standards.

Based on the above-mentioned description, the development of the Timurid-Ming research in the three major literatures can be summarized in the following chronological order:

1. Making translations of both Persian and Chinese sources into Western languages between the late eighteenth and late nineteenth century, as well as the appearance of the first study

³¹² In recent years, one can see an improvement in being able to consult the studies of foreign researchers such as Rossabi etc.

³¹³ To enhance the theorisation-level of the Chinese research on the Timurids and the Ming China needs a more active consultation of foreign researches.

addressing the Timurid-Ming diplomatic contacts by Edgar Blochet in the early twentieth century. Afterwards, there was a break for more than half a century in the Western literature.

2. This was followed by a “boom” of the first initial studies addressing the subject directly in pre-war times in Japan, while China also started to show some academic interest in the matter at the same time. After the 1950s, there was a sharp decline in the Timurid-Ming research in both Japan and China, albeit due to quite different reasons.
3. The first initial Japanese research was followed by Western studies at high theorisation-level from the late 1960s, although this continuation in the West did not rely on a direct take-over of the Timurid-Ming research from the Japanese (as well as Chinese) scholarship, it was rather a reaction to the tribute theory hallmarked by Fairbank and others.
4. From the 1980-90s, one can see an active academic interest of Chinese scholarship in the Timurid-Ming research, producing numerous studies on the subject, though with a generally very low theorisation-level in them, while Japanese scholarship still remains dormant in the matter.

I argue that there are two studies which hit high international standards, those of Morris Rossabi and Ralph Kauz. Both scholars raise clear questions to which they attempt to give clear answers. Fletcher’s study is equally valuable, but he draws attention to a certain problem rather than giving precise answers to precise questions. As for the dissertation of Zhang Wende, he describes the Timurid-Ming contacts in various aspects, which gives a miscellaneous feature of his research rather than focusing on one well-defined problem and attempting to give answer to it in the end. In the Japanese research, it is the studies of Mitsui Takayuki and Murakami Masatsugu that show a certain degree of theorisation-level, however, they fall far behind the level of Rossabi’s and Kauz’s studies.

The studies addressing the features of the Timurid-Ming relationship can be divided into two basic groups. The first group includes those that are taking a so-called “traditional” academic standpoint stressing the paramount ideology of the Confucian prestige. In doing so, they usually

reject the possibility of pointing out certain commercial interests of the Chinese court in its contacts with the peoples of Central Asia. Likewise, such a standpoint cannot accept the possibility that the Chinese emperor would choose a policy different from the expectations expressed in the Confucian doctrines. The studies belonging to the other group either call this “traditional” scholarly standpoint into question such as Fletcher and Rossabi, or as most of the Chinese studies do, they accept the fact of a mutual commercial profit between Central Asia and China, as well as show the Yongle emperor - the most active ruler in foreign policy during the Ming times - as a ruler treating the peoples of Central Asia properly.³¹⁴ To put in other words, the studies in the former group address the Timurid-Ming contacts in the “traditional” scholarly interpretation of the Chinese court’s attitude to its neighbours, while the studies in the other group use the research of the Timurid-Ming relations in order to challenge the “traditional” academic interpretation. Therefore, I argue that the significance of the Timurid-Ming research goes beyond the scope in which one investigates these contacts alone, and that it has much to add to the scholarly interpretation of the general history of the Chinese-foreign relationship. The early Ming period is a very unique era both in the Chinese history and in the history of the Chinese-foreign contacts. Rossabi proves the significant commercial interests for the Chinese court, while Fletcher disproves the former assumption that China - more precisely the Chinese emperor - would ever take a policy different from the Confucian expectations. Therefore, I argue that the main significance of the Timurid-Ming research

³¹⁴ However, there is a sharp difference between the Chinese studies and that of Fletcher and Rossabi in doing so. The Chinese researchers do not attempt to disprove the tribute theory of Fairbank et al. in pointing out the mutual commercial profits between China and the Central Asian nomads. The reason for this may lie in the fact that the tribute theory - due to the long isolation of the Chinese scholarship from the international research trends after the 1950s - failed to become a reference theory in China. The general inclination towards the “theory” of a mutual commercial profit in the Chinese research is mainly due to a more or less superficial look at the classical Chinese texts rather than due to a careful analysis of the “exchange of goods” between China and Central Asia. Moreover, the heroic description of Chen Cheng, as well as the description of Yongle as an open-minded ruler treating the “barbarians” properly is due to the solemnly rhetoric tone of these studies rather than careful investigations.

lies in the uniqueness of this period, which uniqueness can promote further studies on the subject in showing the discrepancy of reality and ideology. Future studies need to formulate clear questions concerning the real conditions of the Chinese-Central Asian relationship in order to see what was actually behind the ideological veil.³¹⁵ In accordance with this, two studies will be addressed below in order to show what directions can be considered as useful for future studies. Neither of these studies addresses the subject of the Timurid-Ming contacts, though both can be related to it.

The first one is a large-scale study by Alastair Iain Johnston, who in his book entitled *Cultural Realism - strategic culture and grand strategy in Chinese history* questions the relationship of the ideal and real behaviours in state-affairs - more precisely the foreign policies - in general. Johnston takes the Ming China's foreign policy as a case study, by arguing that if there is a kind of cultural determinative factor in the foreign policies in the various societies, then its existence must be possibly easier to be discovered in China than elsewhere. Johnston here refers to the Confucian ideology which traditionally puts emphasis on the defensive policy over the offensive one. As a result, Johnston concludes that the Chinese in the early Ming times often took an offensive strategy instead of a defensive one³¹⁶, which contradicts the Confucian stress on defence, and thereby, he argues that although there *is* a Chinese strategic culture, its main components are not necessarily unique at all.

Johnston's findings refer to the flexibility³¹⁷ of the Chinese foreign policy in the early Ming China. This flexibility was also shown in reference to the study of Fletcher by pointing to the Yongle emperor's letter of 1418 sent to Shah Rukh, in which he is addressing the Timurid ruler as equal. Yongle's offensive policy towards the Mongols in the north, as well as his equal

³¹⁵ I do not disagree with those stressing the significant role of the Confucian ideology in the Chinese policy in dealing with the neighbouring "barbarians", however, I would like to point to the fact that reality was never a mere reflection of the ideological thoughts, but realpolitik did always play an important role in putting aside ideological presumptions when it was necessary.

³¹⁶ Such as the five campaigns of Yongle against the Mongols.

³¹⁷ Flexibility here refers to Johnston's conclusion saying that the Chinese rulers did deviate from the Confucian dogmas in handling the Mongols in the north.

treating of Shah Rukh in order to maintain good relationship in the north-western region are considered to be both the results of a hard realpolitik decision, contradicting Confucian expectations, which could have hardly been carried out at usual times. Thereby, the findings of Fletcher and Johnston reveal the discrepancy between ideology and the real behaviour in the early Ming times, calling the mythical all-mighty effect of the Confucian ideology in real practice into question.³¹⁸ Therefore, I suggest that future studies should focus on making clear the relationship of ideological expectations and real conditions both in the history of the Timurid-Ming contacts in a narrower context, as well as the Chinese-foreign contacts in its general history. By doing so, the features of the mechanism of the Chinese-Central Asian contact-formation can be understood more precisely, at least on the official state-level.

The stress here is put on the “official state-level contacts”, since this is not the only aspect one can use to describe the Chinese-Central Asian relations. There is another “story” existing parallel to the official contacts, which “story” is more or less independent of the official diplomatic one: that is, the story of the everyday life at the level of the common people.

Furumatsu Takashi, a Japanese researcher of China and Central Asia, in his study points out the sharp discrepancy between diplomatic relations and everyday life, by taking the northern frontier zone of the Song Chinese dynasty and the Kitan dynasty in the tenth-twelfth centuries as a case study³¹⁹. Furumatsu comes to the conclusion that although there was an agreement made between the Chinese and Kitan rulers to normalise their

³¹⁸ In a study of the development of the Chinese vernacular (Történelem és irodalom: képzelet és valóság a kínai elbeszélő irodalomban, 2003), I draw attention to the Confucian disdain on fictions as untrue stories, which disdain had hindered the development of novels as fictive stories for centuries. However, in the sixteenth-seventeenth century, writing fictions became highly popular among the Chinese intellectuals - although they were usually doing so without revealing their identities. The trick of how to justify the writing of a fictive story was usually to say that the story had actually been heard from someone who could have “witnessed” its “reality”. By doing so, fictive stories were justified by making them look like originally true stories. This is also an example of how the paramount ideology of Confucianism was evaded in reality.

³¹⁹ Forthcoming in 2007 in *Shirin*. Furumatsu Takashi was very kind to provide me with the manuscript.

relationship and set up regulations in a system which was called the Chanyuan system, the reality at the frontier zone was just the opposite to that of the agreed official regulations. Neither the Chinese nor the Kitans were capable to control the frontier zone effectively. Both governments attempted to keep lands and people separately, not allowing a free traffic through the border, therefore, they intended to carry out a strict border management system. Yet, the border management in reality remained very weak, and therefore there was a relatively free traffic of people and goods, as well as information through the border area. Smuggling was a highly common phenomenon in the frontier zone.³²⁰

Similar phenomena can be found in the Ming times too. There are reports on spying, smuggling and bribing in the frontier zone, as well as on Central Asian people buying Chinese women and children and taking them out of the country, or Chinese merchants crossing the border illegally and get to as far as Aksu. But there are also reports on Chinese soldiers guarding the border area who were trading with the nomads along the border line - in many cases, they were doing so for the lack of a well-functioning supply system from the middle of the fifteenth century, or just in order to buy peace from the Mongol tribes who would have attacked them otherwise. Reality at the frontier zone was obviously different from that one would conclude from the official sources. This reality is a different story or narrative which should be studied as much carefully as the official contacts. However, although the world of the everyday life is often touched upon in modern studies, the research of this world has remained quite marginal compared to those dealing with the official diplomatic contacts. The phenomena described above are usually just mentioned shortly without going into deeper analysis. Serruys' study can be considered as an exception, since he attempts to reveal the everyday contacts between the nomads and the Ming Chinese in various aspects. Serruys also explores the discrepancy

³²⁰ For instance, from the middle of the eleventh century, the grain supply for the Song Chinese troops at the frontier zone often came from the northern Kitan areas; or to take another example, Song officers frequently bought horses secretly from the Kitans and taking them into Chinese territory. There were also cases in which private Kitan lands were sold to the Chinese, and vice versa, Chinese lands to the Kitans; or at the times of great famine, Chinese and Kitan people sought for help in each other's lands.

between the Chinese court's desire to keep the Sino-foreign relations under strict control and the actual life at the lower social strata (at the border area and market-places). Hecker's study on the Chen Cheng accounts and her attempts to discover Chen Cheng's personality and his subjective impressions in Herat as a Chinese envoy also points to possible future research trends - that is, a cultural anthropological one.

In the Timurid-Ming research - as well as in the research of the general history of the Chinese-foreign contacts, studies using economical or political approaches of the official contacts have been dominant, along with a cultural one stressing the role of the paramount ideology of Confucianism in realpolitik. However, since Rossabi disproved the tribute theory by pointing out the commercial profits for the Chinese court in its contacts with the "barbarians", and Fletcher proved the flexibility of the Chinese emperors in their realpolitik decision-making in specific conditions, as well as Kauz pointed to the changes of the political and commercial aspects of the official contacts in their dominance in different periods of the fifteenth century, I argue that future research trends should focus on the everyday life, making use of a cultural anthropological approach in order to show what these contacts may actually have meant for Chinese and non-Chinese people, how these contacts may have been changing, and whether the fifteenth century was a kind of unique period in the everyday life contacts too - just as it was unique in the official contacts in the early times. In order to investigate the everyday life and find out its meaning for Chinese and non-Chinese people, researchers should turn their attention to sources different from the official ones. Ildikó Ecsedy, as early as 1979, in her study on the contacts between Chinese and nomads in pre-Islamic times draws attention to the other side of the contacts, the stories of the common people, lonely travellers, merchants, refugees etc. She argues that these stories must be searched for in tales or other kinds of folklore, which may differ from the official story. I argue that Ecsedy's advice should be followed in future research, adding that not only tales or other kinds of folklore, but also any kind of written documents such as the complaints of local officers about the conditions at the border area etc. should be studied in order to reconstruct reality in the everyday contacts and find out the meaning of these contacts for the participants, in a cultural anthropological way. In doing so, I believe that the research of the Timurid-Ming contacts has not come to an end yet.

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Appendix I.

Chinese-Japanese Glossary

1. Chinese Glossary

Aduan	阿端
Anding	安定
Bai Cuijin	白翠琴
Bai Shouyi	白寿彝
baochuan	寶船
cefeng tizhi	册封体制
chama maoyi	茶馬貿易
Chanyuan	澶淵
chaogong tizhi	朝贡体制
Chen Gaohua	陈高华
Chen Cheng	陳誠
Chen Dewen	陳德文
Chen Shengxi	陳生璽
Chen Shoushi	陳守實
Chenghua	成化
Dadu	大都
Daming yitongzhi	大明一統志
daren	大人
Datong	大同
Daowu	倒兀
Deng Cheng	鄧誠
Deng Xiaoping	邓小平
Deng Yanlin	鄧衍林
Duan Hairong	段海蓉
Esen	也先
Fang Guozhen	方国珍
Feng Xishi	冯锡时
Fu An	傅安

fuma	駙馬
Gansu	甘肅
Ganzhou	甘州
Gaochang-guan	高昌館
Gao Yongjiu	高永久
Guxixingji	古西行紀
Guangdong	廣東
Guangxi	廣西
Guangxu Xiangfuxian zhi	光緒祥符縣志
Guochao xianzhenglu	國朝獻徵錄
Guo Ji	郭驥
Guo Zixing	郭子興
Halie	哈烈
Hami	哈密
Han	漢
Han Lin'er	韓林兒
Han Wudi	漢武帝
He Gaoji	何高濟
Hezhou	河州
Heilou	黑婁
Hongwu	洪武
Hongxi	洪熙
Huai	淮
Huangming dazhengji	皇明大政紀
Huangming siyikao	皇明四夷考
Huangming xiangxulu	皇明象胥錄
Huangming zhongzhou renwuzhi	皇明中州人物志
Hui	回
Huihui-guan	回回館
huimeng tizhi	會盟體制
Huitongguan	會同館
Hunan	湖南
Ji'anfu zhi	吉安府志
Jiayu	嘉峪
Jiayuguan	嘉峪關
Jianwen	建文

Jiangxi	江西
Jin	金
Jinling Wenshi jiapu	金陵温氏家譜
Jinyiwei	錦衣衛
Jingtai	景泰
jinshi	進士
juan	券
junren	君人
Kangxi	康熙
koutou	叩頭
Kuan Che	寬徹
Libu zhigao	禮部志稿
Li Da	李達
Liguan shiji	歷官史迹
Li Guoxiang	李国祥
Liguan shiji	歷官事迹
Li Jiang	李江
Li Xian	李暹
Liu Guofang	刘国防
Liu Wei	劉惟
Liu Yingsheng	刘迎胜
Lu Shen	鲁深
Luo Yuejiong	羅曰褻
Ma Junqi	马骏骐
Ma Wensheng	馬文昇
Mao Ruizheng	茅瑞徵
Mingdai Hami Tulufan ziliao huibian	明代哈密吐鲁资料汇编
Ming	明
Minghuidian	明會典
Mingshi	明史
Mingshilu	明實錄
Mingshilu leizuan: shewai shiliao juan	明实录类纂: 涉外史料卷
Mingshilu: Wala ziliao zhaibian	明实录: 瓦刺资料摘编
Mingshilu: Xinjiang ziliao jilu	明实录: 新疆资料辑录
Mingshiqie	明史竊
Ming wuzhi xuanbu	明武職選簿

Qianlong	乾隆
qianshi	僉事
Qin shihuangdi	秦始皇帝
Qing	清
Quxian	曲先
Shanben	善本
Shanben congshu	善本叢書
Shanxi	山西
Shang Yue	尚鉞
Shao Xunzheng	邵循正
sheren	舍人
Shilu	實錄
Shuyu Zhouzilu	殊域周咨錄
Siku quanshu	四庫全書
siren	寺人
Siyikuan	四夷館
Song	宋
Song Sheng	宋晟
Suzhou	宿州
Sui Yangdi	隨楊帝
Taikangxian zhi	太康縣志
Taizu shilu	太祖實錄
Tang	唐
Taozhou	洮州
Tianshun	天順
Tian Weijiang	田衛疆
Tianxia	天下
tongshang guanxi	通商关系
tongshi	通事
tongzhi	同知
Tumu	土木
tuntian	屯田
waichen	外臣
Wanli	萬歷
Wanli Yehubian	萬歷野護編
Wang Chonggu	王崇古

Wang Jiguang	王继光
Wang Yude	王玉德
Wang Zhen	王振
Wen-er-li	温尔里
Wen Houhua	温厚华
Wuzhewei	兀者衛
Xining	西寧
Xiyou shenglan	西游勝覽
Xiyou shenglanshi	西游勝覽詩
Xiyu	西域
Xiyu fanguozhi	西域番国志
Xiyu tongshi	西域通史
Xiyu wanghui jixing shi	西域往回紀行詩
Xiyu xingchengji	西域行成記
Xianbinlu	咸賓錄
Xiang Da	向達
Xie Guozhen	謝国楨
Xinjiang	新疆
Xu Jin	許進
Xuande	宣德
Xuanfu	宣府
Xue Zongzheng	薛宗正
Yan	燕
Yan Congjian	严从简
Yanze	鹽澤
Yang Fuxue	杨富学
Yang Jisheng	楊繼盛
Yang Jianxin	杨建新
Yangzi (Yangtze)	杨子
Yao Chen	姚臣
Yehubian	野護編
Yishiha (Isiha)	亦矢哈
Yingtian	應天
Yongle	永樂
Yumen	玉門
Yu Taishan	余太山

Yuan	元
Yuanshi	元史
Zhang Shicheng	張士誠
Zhang Wende	張文德
Zhang Xinglang	張星烺
Zhao Lisheng	趙俪生
Zheng He	鄭和
Zhengtong	正統
Zhidao	志道
Zhongguo tongshi	中國通史
zhongshunwang	忠順王
Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huibian	中西交通史料匯編
Zhou Liankuan	周連寬
Zhu Biao	朱標
Zhu Di	朱棣
Zhu Qizhen	朱祁鎮
Zhu Xinguang	朱新光
Zhu Yuanzhang	朱元璋
Zhu Yunwen	朱允炆
Zongle	宗泐

2. Japanese Glossary

Ando Shiro	安藤志郎
Enoki Kazuo	榎一雄
Enomoto Takeaki	榎本武揚
Fukazawa Keikichi	深沢惠吉
Fukushima Masayasu	福島正安
Furumatsu Takashi	古松崇志
Haneda Toru	羽田亨
Hattori Shiro	服部四郎
Hino Tsuyoshi	日野強
Horikawa Toru	堀川徹
Hori Sunao	堀直
Kanda Kiichiro	神田喜一郎

Kawaguchi Takuji	川口琢司
Kubo Kazuyuki	久保一之
Mano Eiji	間野英二
Mitsui Takayuki	満井隆行
Miyake Yonekichi	三宅米吉
Miyazaki Ichisada	宮崎市定
Mori Masao	護雅夫
Murakami Masatsugu	村上正二
Nishi Tokujiro	西徳二郎
Otani Kozui	大谷光瑞
Uemura Seiji	植村清二
Sanada Yasushi	真田安
Shinmen Yasushi	新免康
Takasaki Jikido	高崎直道
Watanabe Hiroshi	渡辺宏

Appendix II.

Classical Chinese Sources

The list below is an English extract of the classical Chinese sources concerning the Timurid-Ming Chinese contacts based on the unpublished Chinese-written dissertation of Zhang Wende¹:

1. *Mingshilu*. This work appears to be the most important source for studying the Ming China's foreign contacts. It was compiled on the base of imperial edicts, orders, official reports, archives and other historical writings. Its contents are very abundant about historical events, therefore, it is highly useful for scholars researching politics, economy, military affairs, culture etc. in the Ming China. As for studying its foreign relations with Central Asia, one has to look at the section about the Xiyu (the Western Region). Unfortunately, since the compilers were not really familiar with the conditions on Central Asia, therefore some mistakes can be found in the texts, such as mixing up places and dates, persons and incidents. But these mistakes occur in specific cases only. What seems to be a bigger problem is that it is difficult to establish whether the events described in the *Mingshilu* (such as imperial orders on sending embassies to Central Asia) did happen in reality, or these just remain as orders without being carried out. Yet, the *Mingshilu* can be regarded as the most complete one among all the sources.
2. *Minghuidian*. This work describes the institutions, decrees and regulations in the Ming China. It was compiled three times, which reached its final form in 1587. It includes numerous records concerning tribute embassies from the Timurid Empire.
3. *Libu zhigao*. This book contains administrative and ceremonial regulations, imperial edicts and memoirs, compiled by the Ministry of

¹ Some items were completed according to the notes of Wolfgang Franke in *An Introduction to the Sources of Ming History*. It must be noted that the list above does not include all kinds of Chinese sources, but mainly those that are to be considered the most important ones in the subject.

Rites in 1620. Due to the descriptions on audiences before the emperor and rewards to embassies bringing tributes, one can find useful information on the envoys from Central Asia too.

4. *Ming wuzhi xuanbu*. It is mainly about military officials serving at border garrisons. There was a time (especially during the Zhengtong and Tianshun eras) when many people from the Timurid Empire came to submit to the Chinese authorities, who then were put to garrisons at Peking, Nanking, Gansu etc. It is usually not easy to find their traces in Chinese records, and not even in the *Ming wuzhi xuanbu*, yet it can give some information on them.
5. *Xiyou shenglanishi*. It is a collection of poems, which was *allegedly* written and compiled by Fu An, a Chinese envoy dispatched to Timur in the end of the fourteenth century. Unfortunately, it has not survived to present times.
6. *Xiyu fanguozhi* and *Xiyu xingchengji*. Both accounts were made by the Chinese envoy Chen Cheng sent to Central Asia between 1414 and 1415. The first account is a description of Central Asian cities through the eyes of this Chinese official. Among the cities, the description about Herat takes the half of the script. The *Xiyu fanguozhi* can be regarded as the Chinese counterpart of the Persian Giyyad ad-din's work written a few years later. The *Xiyu xingchengji* is a diary by Chen Cheng about the road from China to Herat, with the names of places and the lengths of time the embassy stayed at each place.
7. *Huangming zhongzhou renwuzhi*. This work was accomplished by 1555, which contains biographies of famous people living in Henan province in the first one hundred years of the Ming dynasty. There is a description of Fu An's life in it too.
8. *Taikangxian zhi*. This is a description of Taikang prefecture, in which one can find a brief biography of Fu An among others.
9. *Guochao xianzhenglu*. This is the most important collection of eminent people's biographies between the beginning of the dynasty and the early Wanli period. It was printed in 1616. It includes descriptions about Fu An, as well as places such as Hami etc.
10. *Wanli Yehubian*. It is mainly about historical, political and institutional affairs in the late Wanli period. It contains personal experiences of Chinese officials such as Chen Cheng and Fu An, reflecting the opinions

of Chinese officials about the Timurid dynasty.

11. *Huangming siyikao*. This is a work in which the Ming Chinese described a part of their relations with the outer world. The preface was written by the author in 1564.
12. *Shuyu zhoulilu*. This work was completed by Yan Congjian in 1574, a comprehensive treatise on foreign countries and their relations with China. Among others, its significance with the Timurids lies in the descriptions about the reaction of the Chinese officials to embassies bringing lions from Central Asian cities such as Samarqand etc. However, unfortunately, one can find mistakes in certain places.
13. *Xianbinlu*. This is another work on foreign countries and peoples, and their relations with China, accomplished by Luo Yuejiong in the sixteenth century.
14. *Huangming xiangxulu*. This work was accomplished by Mao Ruizheng by 1629. In this work, one can find descriptions about Samarqand, Herat and many other places, many of which were extracted from the *Huangming siyikao*.
15. *Mingshi*. This work, which is the dynastical official history of the Ming era, was accomplished during the first half of the eighteenth century in the Qing era. Its materials were mainly taken from the *Mingshilu*, archives, official reports etc. There is a separate part in this work titled *Xiyu* (the Western Region). Many materials in it were taken from the *Huangming siyikao*, the *Mingshilu* and others.

The four works below are modern compilations and editions of some Ming Chinese materials:

1. *Mingdai Hami Tulufan ziliao huibian*. This work was compiled by Chen Gaohua and published in 1984. He collected materials about Turfan and Hami from thirty-five books and arranged them according to a chronological order.
2. *Mingshilu: Xinjiang ziliao jilu*. This work is about all the materials in the *Mingshilu* concerning Xinjiang. It was compiled and punctuated by Tian Weijiang and published in 1983.
3. *Mingshilu: Wala ziliao zhaibian*. This work is about the materials in the

Mingshilu concerning the Oirats. Since there was a close relationship between the Timurid and the Oirats, this work is very useful for researchers on the Timurid dynasty and the Ming China. It was compiled, punctuated, and commented by Bai Cuiqin. It was published in 1982.

4. *Mingshilu leizuan: shewai shiliao juan*. This work was published in 1991, compiled by Li Guoxiang, Wang Yude etc. It contains materials about all the countries in the Mingshilu, put into a chronological order. Among them, it is the chapters about Afganistan, Iran and Central Asia which mainly concerns the Timurid Empire.

Appendix III.

Thematic Table

The table below arranges the studies of the Western, Japanese and Chinese researchers on the Timurid-Ming contacts (as well as the related subjects) according to a thematic point of view:

the Chen Cheng accounts: Morris Rossabi (1983) ¹;
Natalia Karimova;
Boris I. Pankratov;
Bruno Richtsfeld;
Yang Jianxin;
Zhou Liankuan

Chen Cheng: Morris Rossabi (1976) ;
Felicia Hecker;
Emil Bretschneider;
Kanda Kiichiro;
Mitsui Takayuki (1938) ;
Tian Weijiang;
Xue Zongzheng;
Li Jiang;
Ma Junqi;
Yang Fuxue;
Duan Hairong;
Wang Jiguang (2004)

Fu An: Emil Bretschneider;
Enoki Kazuo (1977) ;

¹ The date of publishing is indicated only in the case when the author published more than one work in the subject, and which are also addressed in the dissertation.

Li Xian:

Lu Shen

the Naqqash account²:

Etienne Marc Quatremère;

Edward Rehatsek;

Henry Yule;

K. M. Maitra;

D. M. Dunlop;

Ildikó Bellér-Hann;

Mitsui Takayuki (1937) ;

Miyazaki Ichisada;

Zhang Xinglang;

He Gaoji

Sino-Central Asian relations: Zhao Lisheng;

Liu Guofang

Timurid-Ming diplomatic
contacts:

William Chambers;

Edgar Blochet;

Joseph F. Fletcher;

Morris Rossabi (1970) ;

Charlotte von Verschuer;

Ralph Kauz;

Haneda Toru (1912) ;

Murakami Masatsugu;

Shao Xunzheng;

Chen Shoushi;

Chen Shengxi;

Feng Xishi;

Liu Guofang;

Zhu Xinguang;

² Though the Western literature about the Naqqash account is not addressed in the dissertation for its inclination to having a *linguistic* characteristic feature rather than historical or anthropological ones, I consider necessary to mention the main representatives of the Western research. See the study of Ildikó Bellér-Hann (1995) for details.

Gao Yongjiu;
Wang Jiguang (2004) ;
Zhang Wende

the tribute system:

John K. Fairbank (1942) ;
John K. Fairbank and S. Y. Teng (1941) ;
T. F. Tsiang;
Henry Serruys (1967; 1975)